

## Chapter 1:

### Shocking News

Knock, knock

"Who are you?" Vernon Dursley said, answering the door late one night.

In front of him was a young girl with bushy, brown hair. Her clothes looked as though they had been recently ripped from her body. There was a trace of where tears had streamed down her face from her scared brown eyes. She was shaking uncontrollably.

"I'm... I'm a friend of Harry's" she managed gasp out.

"What happened to you?" he decided to ignore what she had said.

"I just... just need to talk... to talk to Harry," her hands were holding her shirt close around her.

"Hold on a second. POTTER!"

As much as he hated his nephew and didn't want him having company, he was truly worried about what had happened to this girl. She was scared out of her mind. She looked as though she was afraid someone was going to jump out and attack her. As though she had already been severally hurt.

"What's I do now?" he yelled down the stairs.

"Nothing! Just get down here!"

He looked up the stairs to see Harry appear at the top looking completely irritable, "What?"

"Do you know this girl?"

"What girl?" he asked, starting to descend the stairs. "Hermione! What's wrong!"

He jumped down the rest of the stairs as his uncle helped her through the door. She could barely walk properly and when she got through the door she fell to the ground in tears. He rushed forward and picked her up off the ground.

“What happened to you?” he asked, holding her.

Mr. Dursley shut the door and helped Harry get her to the living room. When they sat down both Dudley and Mrs. Dursley gave them weird looks.

“Petunia. Dudley. Can I see you in the kitchen for a minute or two?”

“OK?” his wife answered.

They both got up and followed him through the doorway into the kitchen.

Harry had his arm around Hermione’s shoulders, “What happened?”

“Ron... Ron...,” she began but choked on her words.

“Ron what? What did Ron do?”

She took in a shaky breath and looked into his eyes, “Ron... Ron... raped... me.”

“He what?”

She nodded and started to cry uncontrollably on his shoulder.

“No! He wouldn’t do that! Would he?”

“But he did, Harry. He did!” she cried, clutching onto his shirt.

“I can’t believe him! Why would he do such a thing to you?”

"I don't know. I think it was because I told him I didn't like him as more than a friend. But that was a couple days ago. Wait! Where are you going? Don't leave me!"

Harry had started to stand up. She grabbed at his hands and tried to keep him where he was.

"Hermione, I'm just going to get you a glass of water. Don't worry! I'll be right back. I promise."

As he walked away he could hear her gasping for air. He didn't want to leave her in this state even though he knew it was only for a minute.

"What has happened to the poor girl?" his uncle asked when he walked into the kitchen.

"Why do you care? She's a witch," he said, getting a glass from one of the cabinets.

"Did you not see the look on her face!"

"Of course I did!" he practically yelled as he filled the glass with water.

"Then you should understand why I care!"

"I don't think I should tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because her parents should know first."

"But I could help! Just tell me what has happened!"

Harry took a deep breath and looked at the doorway leading to the living room, "OK. She was raped by someone she thought was a friend. Someone I thought was a friend."

"What!" all of the Dursleys said together.

“Now that you know I should really get back to her. She’s in a terrible state right now and she needs a true friend. Someone that’s not going to hurt her.”

“Who would do such a thing, Vernon?” he heard his aunt whisper.

“I have no clue,” he answered her.

Someone terrible, he thought.

“Here you go, Hermione,” he said softly, rubbing her on the back.

She reached out a shaky hand and took the glass from Harry, “Thanks.”

He watched her try to take a sip, but she ended up splashing water down her front, managing to get very little in her mouth.

“Hermione, we need to call you parents. They need to know what happened.”

“They’re not home! How do you think he managed to do that to me!”

His eyes grew large, “Did he break into your house?”

“No. Not exactly. Not unless you count floo powder. He asked me if my parents were home and I said no thinking that he was just being observant. That’s when he... he...”

“I don’t need to hear anymore!” he stopped her and she started crying even harder. “Do they have a cell phone?”

She shook her head, unable to speak.

“The only way to get a hold of them is by owl then. Come on.”

“To where?”

“My room.”

“What! No!”

“Huh? Oh. Oh, God no! NO! Hermione! I would never harm you! I would never dream of doing that to you. Or anyone at that! I just want to get Hedwig and the last time I tried to leave the room for a minute you freaked out. Hermione! Please. It’s me for goodness sake! All right. Um. Hold on. Aunt Petunia!”

“Yes?” she asked, poking her head out of the kitchen.

“Will you sit here with her while I go get my owl?”

“Of course, of course!” she ran over to the couch and sat down next to Hermione.

“No, Harry!” she said, pulling on his arm.

“I’ll be right back! My aunt won’t let any things happen to you! I’ll be right back! I promise. Unless you’d rather go up with me,” he raised his eyebrows up at her.

She bit down on her lip and sank into the couch.

“I didn’t think so. I’ll be right back!” he ran towards the stairs and up to his room.

Looking around he couldn’t see Hedwig anywhere. Perfect time to go out flying, Hedwig! Just perfect!

He ran back down the stairs and found Mrs. Dursley with her arm around Hermione trying to get her to stop crying and calm down.

“Look! Look! Harry’s back! He’s back. He’s here for you. Where’s your owl?” she snapped, looking at him.

“Apparently out flying,” he huffed as he sat back down next to Hermione. “How long will your parents be out of town?”

“Almost all summer. I don’t know what to do or where to stay. I was suppose to go over to... to... his... house today. I don’t know what to do,” she cried on his shoulder.

He wrapped his arms around her. There’s no way the Dursleys will let her stay here.

“Oh my dear! You can stay here! For as long as you need to!” his aunt said.

Harry’s eyes shot open, “Are you serious?”

“Yes. You can stay in the guest room.”

“Would you like to stay here, Hermione?”

“I... I don’t know. I’d feel like an intrusion.”

“Oh my dear. Potter’s the intrusion! Not you. You’ve been through something horrible and we’re here to help.”

She looked up at Harry, “You want me to stay, don’t you?”

“I would enjoy the company. Do you want to stay?”

“Um. OK. But if Ron shows up for any reason please, please don’t let him know I’m here.”

“Trust me, I won’t!” he assured her. “He’ll never touch you again!”

“Thank you, Harry!” she sobbed, throwing her arms around his neck, crying even harder.

He felt his heart break as he held her close. She had never broken down like this before. Then again, nothing that bad had ever happened to her. How was he going to be able to help her get through this?

He felt her sob against his body and he rubbed her back. He rested his head on top of hers and sighed.

His aunt stood up and walked back into the kitchen. Just as she did, Dudley walked out and sneered at him.

He lifted up his head, "What?"

"Oh, nothing," he shrugged.

Hermione lifted up her head and sniffed. She looked from Harry to Dudley then back.

"What?" he asked with irritancy.

"Nothing," he shook his head.

"Then go away," Harry snapped.

"My house," he pointed at himself.

"Don't care," he snapped, mocking him and pointing at himself also.

Hermione took in a shaky breath and looked up at Harry. He looked down at her and shrugged. Somehow he knew what she was thinking.

They looked back at Dudley and saw him grinning.

"What the hell do you want, Dudley!" Harry yelled.

"Nothing!" but they saw him look Hermione up and down.

Harry released her and ran at his cousin. He jumped and ran back into the kitchen. Harry gritted his teeth and walked back over to Hermione. He grabbed her hand and pulled her to her feet.

"What are you doing?" her eyes showed her fear.

"We're going up to the guest room. I suggest you lock the door tonight when you go to bed. I don't trust Dudley," he whispered.

"No, Harry! I don't want to go into a bedroom!" she tried to back away.

“Hermione. I’m not going to harm you. I never want to harm you. Please trust me. You’re my best friend. Have I ever done anything to harm you before?” he gently whispered.

“No. You haven’t. I’m sorry. I’m just a little shaken up right now.”

“You’re really shaken up. But you have to trust me. I don’t want to harm you. Now come on before Dudley comes back in.”

“OK,” she allowed him to pull her up the stairs.

They walked into the guest room and Harry shut the door. He turned around and watched her look around the room.

“It’s nice in here,” she whispered.

“Yeah. My aunt decorated it. Too girly for my tastes,” he informed her.

“Yeah. It is kind of girly,” she smiled weakly.

“Huh. Yeah.”

He saw her eye the bed cautiously, then him. Her arms were crossed over her chest tightly.

“Hermione, I’m not going to do anything. I promise!” he sighed.

He walked over to her and she backed away. He sighed and held out his hand.

“Please trust me.”

She placed her hand in his and smiled, “Please don’t let anyone harm me.”

“I won’t,” he whispered, walking up to her and hugging her.

He stayed with her until she fell asleep then walked out of the room. He shut the door behind him and quickly got his wand. He didn’t care



about the underage law. He locked her door with magic then headed back down stairs.

He found his aunt, uncle, and cousin watching TV in the living room. He walked over to the vacant armchair and sat down.

"How is she?" his uncle asked, not looking away from the TV.

"Not so good. She's finally fallen asleep," he sighed.

"What's her full name?" his aunt turned to him.

"Hermione Granger."

"Granger? Would her parents happen to be dentists?" she asked.

"Yeah... Why?" he asked slowly.

"Oh, Vernon. We know them." She gasped.

"We do. That's their daughter? I feel sorry for them. Their daughter's a witch," he shook his head.

"She the best bloody witch there is!" Harry shouted. "And I happen to know for a fact that they are bloody proud of her!"

They all jumped and looked at him. Dudley glared at him, but his parents just turned back to the television.

You better stay away from Hermione you fat freak! She's already been through a lot. She doesn't need your fat ass staring her up and down all day.

A/N: This is my first story to be posted on my own account. Please don't flame too much. And for those that read my other one that was posted by leonsgriever69... you'll notice I'm not the biggest fan of Ron. Lol... please review. I'll try and get the next chapter posted soon.

## Chapter 2:

### Trouble Starts Already

Harry woke early the next day and started to make a small breakfast. His aunt walked down and found him doing so.

"I don't remember telling you to make breakfast this morning," she said groggily.

"That's because you didn't," he whispered.

"Oh. Thank you. I guess," she shrugged.

She started to reach for a piece of toast but he slapped her hand away, "It's not for you. It's for Hermione."

She jumped in shock that he hit her, but shrugged again. As long as he would be making the breakfast for the extra mouth, she did not care. She started to make a pot of coffee and saw him set up a tray to take up to her room. He placed all the food on it and headed up the stairs. She noticed his wand sticking out of his front pocket and she suddenly felt scared.

Harry walked slowly up the stairs, careful not to spill anything. He shifted the tray onto his left hand and pulled his wand out. He quickly unlocked the door and walked in.

Hermione was fast asleep on the bed. She had a troubled look about her and she had her fists clenched tightly around the top of the comforter. He slowly walked over to her and placed the tray on the nightstand. She made a small noise and he jumped a little.

"Poor Hermione," he whispered.

He headed back to the door, "Harry?"

He turned around. Hermione was pushing herself up. She looked at him through sleepy eyes.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“I made you some breakfast. I was just bringing it up for when you woke up. Did you sleep all right?” he asked gently.

She shook her head while rubbing her eyes clear of sleep, “What time is it?”

“Just early of eight.”

“Why are you up so early? It’s summer.”

“I was unable to sleep. I woke up around six and couldn’t get back to sleep. But I must warn you. Ron is going to be coming over to get me to go to his house in a few days.”

“What? No! No, no! Don’t let him come here! Please,” she panicked.

He quickly walked over to her and she became restless. He sat down on her bed and grabbed her hands.

“Hermione. I won’t let him harm you. I won’t tell him you’re here. I won’t let him touch you,” his voice started strong, but then began to crack as he saw the tears swell in her eyes.

“Harry,” she breathed.

He let go of her hands and hugged her, “It’s all right. I’ll make sure you’re safe here. I promise you. Here. Eat,” he picked up the tray from the nightstand and placed it on her lap.

“Thank you,” she whispered, picking up the fork and pushing the food around. “I’m not sure I’ll be able to eat much though. I don’t feel that hungry.”

“I don’t expect you to eat a lot. You’re not going to feel hungry for sometime, but you’ll feel better after eating something,” he headed for the door again.

“Harry?” she stopped him.

“Yeah?”

“Thank you. Not just for breakfast. But for everything. Thank you for being here for me,” she breathed.

He walked back over to her and kissed her on the cheek, “I’ll always be here to help you.” He walked yet again to the door, then turned to look at her, “Would you like anything else?”

She shook her head, but then changed her mind, “I would like some company. I don’t feel safe by myself.”

Harry smiled at her, “I’ll be right back. I am hungry. I’ll get myself something then be right back up.”

“You can have some of mine as long as you don’t leave me alone.”

He gave a small laugh and walked back into the room, “Do you want me to keep the door open?”

She nodded after taking a bite of eggs. He grabbed the chair that was next to the door and dragged it over to the bed. He set it down facing her and sat down.

“Happy?” he laughed.

“As happy as I’ll be able to get,” she sighed.

He placed his hand on top of hers as she set her fork down. He rubbed the top of it with his thumb. She smiled weakly at him and looked out the window.

“The weather matches my mood,” she mumbled.

He too looked out the window and noticed for the first time that it was cloudy. Rain was probably on its way.

Hermione looked down at her hand and saw he had not let go. She felt scared, but found she did not mind his touch. Her stomach turned

as though she had just swallowed hundreds of fluttering butterflies. She felt her face burn red and slowly moved her hand out from under his.

He glanced over at her but then looked back out the window when he saw a car pull into the driveway. He stood up and leaned over the bed to get a better look.

"Harry, what are you doing?" she asked, sitting up more to get as much of her body out from under him as she could.

"Shit!" he whispered.

He ran over to the door and out of the room. He jumped down the stairs three at a time. He ran over to his aunt who was sipping on a cup of coffee and reading the morning paper.

"What is she doing here!" he asked in a hushed voice.

"Who?" she sighed, putting down the paper and her coffee.

"Aunt Marge," he hissed.

Her brow furrowed, "What?"

"She just pulled in the driveway in a taxi. What the hell is she doing here!"

Her mouth fell slightly open and she stood up and walked to the window, "I don't know. Go wake your uncle up. If he yells at you... oh well."

Harry rolled his eyes and ran back up the stairs. He heard Hermione call his name as he ran passed her room. He threw his uncles door open with a bang.

"What the bloody HELL!" he yelled, sitting up suddenly.

Harry marched over to him, "What is Aunt Marge doing here!"

“What are you talking about boy?” he snapped.

He let out a heavy sigh, “She just pulled into the driveway in a taxi. Why the hell is she here!”

“Bloody hell if I know. That woman has a mind of her own,” he rolled back over onto his large stomach.

Harry grabbed his shoulder with force, “Hermione is in the guest bedroom! If Aunt Marge is staying for a couple days, we’re going to have little problem.”

He used sarcasm on the word little. He glared at his uncle, then rolled his eyes when he just sat there with his brow furrowed. He ran out of the room and back down the hall.

“Harry!” Hermione yelled.

He stopped and walked to her doorway. He placed his hand on the doorframe and looked at her.

“What’s going on?” she asked.

“My Aunt Marge is here and nobody knows why,” he informed her.

“That means I’m going to have to go somewhere else, doesn’t it?” she breathing became heavy as her eyes grew.

“No. I won’t let them make you leave. You’re not going anywhere as long as I can help it.”

“Please don’t leave me alone,” she whispered as he started to walk away.

He sighed and walked over to her, “I promise I’ll be right back. If Dudley wakes up and starts bothering, just yell my name and I’ll be up in a flash. It’s OK, Hermione. You’ll be safe here.”

He placed his hand on her cheek and smiled. Then he ran out of the room and hopped down the stairs as quickly as he could. He reached the bottom and saw his two aunts look at him from the doorway.

“You still here, are you?” Aunt Marge sneered. “Good. You can do all the work for dear Petunia here.”

## Chapter 3:

### And So It Starts

"Hello Aunt Marge," he sneered back. "It's not wonderful to see you again."

Her face scrunched up in anger and she took a step towards him, "I would be careful if I were you, boy."

"What are you going to do? Sit on me and turn me into a pancake?" he stood his ground.

Mrs. Dursley slipped her small form between them, "Now Marge. How long will you be staying?"

"Not sure yet," she said, still eyeing Harry dangerously.

He just glared back, showing no fear, for there was no reason for him to be afraid of her. He knew he could out run her if he had to. He laughed in his head at this thought.

"Well, you are always welcome here, but the guest room is sort of occupied at the moment," Mrs. Dursley said nervously.

"They will be gone soon. I can feel it. Now where is my old brother and my little Dudders?"

"They are still in bed. I'll go wake them," she disappeared up the staircase.

Harry turned to head up them too but Marge stopped him, "Boy, take my bags up to the guest room."

"No," he snapped, turning back to look at her.

She puffed her chest out and took another step towards him, "I'll warn you now. Disrespect me and there will be repercussions."

"If you say so," he smiled a fake smile.



“Now take my bags up to the room,” she ordered, taking off her gloves and walking into the kitchen towards the fridge.

Think again you fat ass.

Harry walked up the stairs paying no attention to the bags by the door. He walked back into Hermione’s room and fear was on her face. He could feel his heart break again. He hated seeing her like this.

“Hermione? Are you all right?” he asked, walking over to sit in the chair again.

He noticed she hadn’t touched any of the food, but the drink was completely gone. He looked back up at her and saw the trail of fallen tears.

She reached her hand down and grabbed the arm of his sleeve. She shook her head and clutched his sleeve tighter.

He placed his hand back on top of hers and felt her relax under his touch. She gave him a weak smile and looked out the window. It had started to drizzle outside.

“As soon as I felt the first tear fall from my face, I saw the first rain drop fall from the heavens,” she whispered, not looking away from the window.

Harry gave her hand a soft squeeze and felt a tear come to his eyes. He quickly brushed it away and forced himself to think happy thoughts.

“I fear that if I cry harder, the skies will cry harder, too,” she whispered again. “Sometimes I wonder if God picks a person that has been through so much terror in one sitting and bases the weather on that one person. I feel as though He has picked me this time. I fear that we won’t see a ray of sunlight for a long time.”

He felt a tear fall from his eyes and looked away from her crying form. His breathing was shaky. He couldn’t let her see him shed a tear. It

would only scare her more. He wiped his face down and took in a deep breath before looking back. She was still staring out the window as though in a trance.

"I can only imagine what goes on through Gods head. Probably asks Himself why. Why has all gone wrong? I never planned for all this pain. But then I think. It wasn't His fault, was it? People don't think with their heads. It is their fault. They do bad things to try and make their lives more... interesting."

She took in a deep, shaky breath and let it out all at once. Outside there was a low rumble of thunder. Harry looked from the clouds to her. Could she be right?

He rubbed her hand lightly and she came out of her trance. She looked down at him and he noticed hers eyes were bloodshot and full of tears. His heart broke more at the sight. He couldn't handle it. His eyes swelled with tears.

She quickly looked away, "I'm sorry, Harry. I don't mean to bring you down."

She pulled her hand away from his and rested it in her lap. She brought her other hand up to her faces and brushed it across her cheeks, knocking the tears away.

Harry made to stand up, but she stopped him.

"Please don't go. I don't want to be alone," she refused to look at him.

He nodded and settled himself comfortably in the chair. He closed his eyes for a second trying to think of something happy. Anything happy. Nothing came to him.

He heard Hermione let out a little sob and opened his eyes. A few seconds later there was another low rumble of thunder. He stared at the sky and his brow furrowed. He looked back at Hermione and saw her face in her hands.

The rain started to pick up. It splattered lightly on the window. He let his focus rest on Hermione. Her body shook in a silent sob. He felt the vibration run through his hand that was resting on the bed. There was another low rumble of thunder. He looked out the window again and stared at the sky.

It was dark out. The clouds stretched all the way to the horizon on all sides. There was no hint of a break in the weather and he knew it would only get worse as the hours passed and turned into days.

There was another shake from Hermione and lightning flashed across the sky. Then another low rumble. How could it be? As Hermione got worse, the weather got worse.

Then Dudley popped his head in the door, "Guess what cousin. Aunt Marge is staying a couple days and she is going to have to stay in your room."

"Who? Aunt Marge?" he asked.

"No. You're little friend," he grinned.

Hermione's tearstained face appeared from her hands, "No."

## Chapter 4:

### Arguments Arise

“What! She can’t stay in a room with me? Not at night! She’s already scared out of her mind. You can’t force her to stay in a room with a boy,” Harry yelled at his cousin.

“It’s either that or you and I share a room and Marge sleeps in your room. With all your magic shit,” Dudley sneered.

Harry’s heart sank to the bottom of his stomach. He new they wouldn’t let her stay in his room with all his wizarding things. It was Dudley’s way of tormenting him. He didn’t want Hermione to be scared though. He didn’t want her to have fear of going through the same horrible experience. Or at least fear it would happen. He didn’t want her hurt anymore.

He looked over at Hermione and could tell she was thinking the same thing. Her eyes were filled with fear. He heard more than saw Dudley walk away with a smile on his face.

“Hermione,” he started.

She shook her head and looked back out the window. Tears fell from her eyes nonstop. She let out a sob.

Then the rain started to smack onto the window. He briefly looked out the window at the darkening sky and looked back at Hermione.

“I don’t want you hurt,” he whispered.

He reached out his hand but thought otherwise. He brought it back down to his knee. He pushed himself out of the chair and started to pace around. There had to be a way out of this.

He went through all the possibilities in his head, but none led to anything good. Then he found a solution. He turned back towards her in a quick spin. She jumped a little at his sudden move.

“Would you feel more comfortable if you stayed in my room and I slept out on the couch?” he asked her, then he quickly added, “I don’t mind. As long as you feel safe and out of any harm I am fine with sleeping in the living room.”

She shook her head, “I don’t want to push you from your room.”

“No. I honestly don’t mind. I want you to feel comfortable. If you can think of anything, please don’t feel hesitant to speak it. I only care about your own safety even though I would never harm you,” he whispered.

Her mouth opened slightly as her brow furrowed. She turned away from him, her expression didn’t change. She looked out at the sky and watched as a flash of lightning alit everything.

“Who’s that?” Marge said from the doorway.

They both turned to look at her. She had her fat hands on her pudgy hips. There was a look that could kill on her face. Harry felt his blood start to boil.

“Who’s... that?” she repeated slower.

“I heard you the first time!” Harry shouted.

Hermione jumped a little and backed into the corner of the bed.

“If you heard me, answer me,” she snarled.

“No,” he lowered his voice.

“Don’t disrespect me boy,” her upper lip started to twitch.

His eyes narrowed as he continued to stare at her.

“Marge, I was wondering...” Mr. Dursley walked up behind his sister and stared from her to Harry. “Uh, Marge. Why don’t we go down in the living room? I’ll explain some things when we get down there.”

She gave Harry one last death stare before walking away. His uncle turned to him and gave him a warning look.

“Don’t piss her off too much while she’s here.”

“Don’t tell her what happened to Hermione,” he warned back.

“Why not?”

“She doesn’t have a right to know. And I don’t think Hermione wants everyone knowing what she had to go through. Do you?” he asked, turning to her.

She shook her head but didn’t say anything.

“Fine. As long as you stay out of her way while she’s here.”

“Fine,” Harry sneered.

They watched as Mr. Dursley walked away. Hermione slowly moved back to the center of the bed. Her eyes showed even more fear than before.

Harry walked over to her and offered her his hand.

“Why?” she asked nervously.

“We’re going to get you settled in my room. I really don’t mind sleeping on the couch as long as you feel comfortable and safe,” his voice had turned from an angry loud to a gentle soft.

She slowly extended her hand and placed it in his. He closed his fingers around her and helped her get out of bed without stumbling. He snatched her shoes off the floor and led her out into the hall. He walked passed two doors then turned into his own room.

Hermione looked around, “This is definitely a change from the guest room.”

He was glad when he heard her laugh. He could distantly hear the rain lighten up outside. He shook his head of any thoughts that it may be reflecting her mood.

Both of them jumped as Hedwig suddenly came flying through the window and showered them with water. Hermione brought her hand up to wipe her face clear of water and noticed Harry had not yet let go of her hand.

She made a small coughing sound and he turned to look at her. She waved their hands in front of his face and turned a soft shade of pink.

"Sorry," he whispered, letting go of her hand.

She just smiled and wiped the water off her face. She ran her hands over her hair to brush any water that might have landed on her head off.

"Sorry about the mess, but I am a guy," he smiled weakly.

"No, that's fine. I don't mind. It reflects your homework habits," she laughed.

He gave her a fake glare and started to pick up some of his clothes. As he picked up a shirt he noticed a pair of boxers under it. He quickly dropped the shirt and picked it up again only this time grabbing the boxers, too. Thankfully she hadn't seen.

She walked over to Hedwig and started to stroke her feathers. Then she noticed a small letter tied to her leg. She reached down and removed it. The envelope fell open to reveal Ron's handwriting. She quickly dropped it and took a step backwards. She backed into Harry and he grabbed her arms to keep her from falling.

"What's wrong?" he asked, letting her go.

"You... you got a letter from... him." She whispered.

"Oh," his eyes fell to the floor. "I asked him to stop writing to me, but I told him it was because of my uncle."

"You don't have to stop sending letters to him just because of me," she whispered.

"That's not why. I don't want to be friends with him anymore because of what he did to you," he whispered back.

"Harry, don't."

"Don't what?" he asked, truly confused now.

"Just... don't," she looked away.

He heard a rumble of thunder and knew she was starting to get upset again. He sighed and walked passed her. He grabbed the letter then walked over to the trashcan. He threw the letter away and started to make his bed.

"Why'd you throw it away?" she asked.

He sighed again, "Because I don't want to read it."

There was truth in his voice that she could not miss even if she wanted to. She started to feel angry.

There was a loud clap of lightning and he turned to look at her. He saw her face had turned red. He gave her a questioning look.

"Don't stop being friends with him because of me," she said in a hushed annoyance.

"I would expect you to want me to stay away from him after what he did," he crossed his arms over his chest.

"I did too. But I don't think you should..." he stopped her.

"Hermione. It's my choice if I want to stay friends with him or not. Don't try and say I can't stop talking to him after what he did. It's my choice. Hermione, I have always cared more about what happens to you than I have Ron. I don't know why, but I think it's because you're



a girl and more can happen to you. Bad more. Don't tell me I can't make him leave me alone also," he whispered dangerously.

She started to back up towards the door. She was scared.

"I'm sorry, Hermione. I shouldn't have snapped. I'm not going to hurt you. I promise. How many times do I have to say that? A hundred and one?" he calmed himself down instantly.

She stopped walking and stood still. He averted his eyes and continued to make his bed. When he finished he looked around nervously and merely glanced at Hermione. There were tears in her eyes.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

"Why?"

"For what happened to you. And for snapping at you," he kept his voice low and soft. He didn't want to scare her anymore, "You can sit down if you want. You could even go back to bed if you wanted to. I'll preoccupy myself. I can write your parents now that Hedwig's back."

He had his hand held out towards the bed. He stood like that for a second. Then he rolled his fingers into a ball and wiped away the sweat that was forming on his palms.

Hermione slowly made her way to the bed to sit down. She didn't make eye contact with him. Before she sat down he had grabbed her arm. She finally looked up at him. His eyes had kindness in them.

"Come here," he pulled on her arm and hugged her tightly, "I'm sorry. I don't want you to be scared. I want you to feel safe."

She held onto him just as tightly, "Thank you."

He kissed her on top of her head and slowly released her. He felt her do the same and when her grip loosened enough he walked over to his desk.

She watched him for a second as her arms fell back to her sides. She bit her lower lip and slowly sat down. She watched as he grabbed his quill, ink, and some parchment. He had written a lot on the parchment before he finally rolled it up as small as he could.

He walked over to Hedwig and whispered to her to take it to Hermione's parents as fast as she could. They both watched her fly out the window and into the rain out of sight.

Hermione watched Harry out of the corner of her eyes. He was picking up the rest of his clothes and shoving them into his wardrobe. He then started to pick up all his books and stacked them on his desk. He felt her watching him and turned to look at her. Her eyes quickly shot away. He laughed to himself.

"Do you want me to stay up here with you? Or do you want to do something else?" he asked.

"I guess we could do something else," she shrugged.

"What would you like to do?" he sat down on the bed next to her, but made sure there was a large space between them.

"I don't know," she eyed the space between them and decided she was OK with it.

She bit her bottom lip again, and looked away.

His brow furrowed as he looked at her. She was getting too scared too easily.

"You want to just go on a walk?" he asked.

"In the rain?" she questioned.

"Why not? I won't be able to tell if you're crying if it's raining," he laughed lightly.

"Sure," she whispered, looking back.

He gave her a kind smile and stood up. He extended his hand to her again. She slid her hand into his and stood up. He did not let go of her hand yet again. He led her out of the room and down the stairs.

They peeked around the corner to check that the Dursleys weren't paying attention to anything but themselves. They weren't. Harry slowly opened the door and let her walk out first. He shut it behind him as quietly as he could.

Hermione pulled her hand free of his and crossed her arms over her chest. He felt so bad for her. She would never be the same again.

"It's warm out here," she whispered.

"Yeah it is," he said, looking up towards the sky. "Weird. I was expecting it to be a bit cooler because of the rain. Well, hopefully if we get too hot the rain will keep us cool."

He smiled at her, but she just looked away. The smile slowly left his face and he looked down the road. Nobody was out. Nobody even seemed to be home.

He turned back to Hermione, "So which way would you like to go?"

"It doesn't matter," she still did not look at him.

How could he make her more comfortable? He thought for a little bit but nothing came to him. Then without thinking he grabbed her hand and forced her to look at him.

"Why are you scared of me?" he whispered forcefully.

"I'm not scared of you. I'm scared of every guy. I don't feel I can trust anyone anymore. That itself is a scary thought. And..." she stopped and looked away again.

"And what?" he said softly.

"And... I think... I'm starting to... to..." she stopped again.

“Hermione. Talk to me.”

Her eyes filled with tears again. But if they had fallen, he wouldn't have been able to tell because of the rain. She let her eyes wonder back onto Harry's and she felt lost in the depth of their green.

“I'm starting to get feelings for you,” she breathed.

His mouth fell open in surprise. He released her hand and took a step backwards. Then he saw the tears grow larger in her eyes. He hesitantly walked back towards her and pulled her into a hug.

“I'm sorry, Harry. I shouldn't have said that,” she sobbed against his chest.

“Shh,” he stroked her hair.

“It's just every time you hold my hand I've been getting these butterflies. I'm so sorry, Harry.”

“Shh. Don't talk anymore. I'll stop holding your hand if that will make you more comfortable,” he offered.

She shook her head, “No. It will only make things worse. I don't want to be hurt again, Harry.”

He leaned back just enough to look her in the face, “I won't hurt you.”

He brought a hand up and cupped her cheek gently. Her eyes closed and he could barely see the tears leak out. Her eyes opened and she stared into his with such intent that he felt his own heart flutter against his chest.

He lowered his head slowly as hers came up to meet his. Their lips touched and she pulled back slightly.

“I won't hurt you,” he whispered so softly only she would have heard it if others had been around.

She moved up and let her lips barely touch his. She let out a shaky breath. Then he pushed his head against hers and kissed her very lightly. He pulled away almost instantly and looked at her.

Her eyes were closed again. Then her body relaxed against his but she started to cry.

The sun started to peek out of the clouds, but it continued to rain in a drizzle. This was a distant rumble of thunder from far away. Harry stared up at the sky trying to figure out what she was feeling at the moment.

"How 'bout we go back inside," he let go of her and started to walk away.

"Harry, wait," she pulled on his arm.

"Yeah?"

She looked at him for a second, then pulled on his arm bringing his head back down to hers. This time she put pressure on their lips.

Her lips felt so soft on his. He immediately felt himself melt into her kiss. She pulled away and looked at him.

"I'm sorry. I just wanted a real kiss," she whispered.

He had a goofy smile on his face, "No. I don't mind. Come on. Let's get out of the rain."

She followed him back inside feeling odd. She was glad she was able to kiss him, but Ron kept popping into her head making her want to make space between them. She looked down and had just noticed that he was holding her hand again, but this time for a whole new reason.

When the door opened they could hear yelling, "No, I will not leave tonight!"

“Marge, please. This is really important. This girl has gone through something horrible,” they heard his aunt say.

“What has she gone through?” she snapped.

“Potter has insisted that we don’t tell you,” his uncle sighed.

“And why not?”

“He says it is none of your business and, believe it or not, I agree. I’m sorry Marge, but we don’t have room for you right now.”

“I’m not leaving.”

Harry quickly walked up the stairs with Hermione and went into his room as quietly as he could. Hermione sat down on his bed as he sat back down at his desk.

He pulled out his wand and waved it at both of them. Their clothes and hair became dry in an instant. Then they heard footsteps up the stairs.

His uncle appeared in his doorway, “I’m sorry but you will have to stay in here for a couple days.”

“We’ve decided that I will sleep down in the living room so that she won’t be scared that something will happen,” Harry said to his uncle.

“No. I will not have you down in the living room with the television all night. I’m sorry, but you have to stay in here, too.”

“What? No! Hermione needs to have a room to herself. I refuse to stay in here with her,” he yelled.

“Then sleep outside in the rain!” Mr. Dursley shouted.

He stormed from the room and Harry turned to Hermione. He tried to read her face but there was nothing.

She was thinking, “I’ll just... sleep on the couch then.”

“No. I don’t trust Dudley! I don’t trust him one bit! I guess we’ll both have to stay in here,” he sighed. “Hermione, I promise you will be safe with me. I won’t hurt you. I’m not going to do anything. I promise. I’ve never broken a promise to you before and I don’t plan on starting.”

A tear rolled down her face, “I know, Harry. I know.”

## Chapter 5:

### I Know

Hermione sat on the edge of the bed staring at Harry. He sat on the edge of the cot he had set up, staring right back.

"I won't do anything," he whispered.

"I know," she whispered back.

"Then get in bed."

"I'm still scared."

"I know. But I won't hurt you."

"I know."

They were speaking by wand light. It was twelve o'clock at night and Hermione would not get into bed. Harry had been saying things to try and get her to get some sleep since nine. The door was ajar and there was no sound around them except for Marge's snoring.

He stood up and walked over to her. He sat down next to her still holding his wand. He reached over and grabbed her hand. He held it tenderly and brought it up to his lips. He placed a small kiss on top of it.

"Please get some sleep, Hermione. You need it. You'll feel better if you sleep. I swear I won't do anything."

"I know."

"Come on," he stood up and pulled on her arm. He threw the blankets back on the bed and held out his arm for her to get in. She hesitantly sat down. He shook his head with a laugh and pushed her legs up onto the bed. She made her way onto her back and he pulled the covers back over her. He placed a small kiss on her forehead.



He walked back over to the cot and laid down on it. He threw the covers over himself and looked back up at Hermione. She was staring at him with fear in her eyes.

“Do you want me to leave a small light on so you will be able to see any movement?” he whispered to her.

He saw her nod and he got back up. He went over to his dresser and felt around for the switch on his lamp. Finally he found it and turned it on. He put out the light from his wand then pointed it at the lamp. The light died down to a soft glow.

“How’s that?” he turned back to her.

She just nodded, but never took her eyes off of him. There seemed to be an eerie glow over her. She had a restless spirit that would not settle until she felt the touch of real love. He knew this, but never said anything to her. He didn’t want her getting worried.

He went back to the cot and got as comfortable as he possibly could, “I love you, Hermione. I’m not going to harm you.”

“I know,” she breathed.

Harry felt his eyes close and he drifted off into sleep. Slowly Hermione followed, but did not have as restful a sleep as he did.

He woke around three in the morning to the sound of her crying. He rubbed his eyes to get the sleep out then sat up.

He reached out for his glasses and looked at her. She was sitting up in a ball. He threw the covers back and walked over to her.

He sat down in front of her and pulled her into his arms, “It’s OK. I’m here. It’s all right.”

She sobbed into his chest and shook her head.

“Nothing will harm you. I won’t let anyone touch you,” he rubbed her back.

“I know,” she choked out.

## Chapter 6:

### Fighting For Safety

Harry woke up with a crick in his neck. He looked around him and saw Hermione sobbing in her sleep in his arms. They were both on his bed and he was leaning up against the wall.

He checked all around him to make sure nothing had happened during the night. To his relief, nothing showed any signs of anything that might have happened.

He shook Hermione slightly and she opened her eyes. She looked up at him through bloodshot eyes. She hadn't slept since she had woken up during the night. At least that assured him that nothing had happened.

He kissed her on top of the head and whispered gently in her ear, "It's all right. I've got you."

She rested her head back down on his chest, but continued to sob. He rested his chin on top of her head and started to rub her arm.

"Shh. Nothing will harm you. I've got you," he spoke gently.

The sobs started to die down into silent tears, but then the door swung open with a loud bang. Both of their heads shot to look at the doorway.

In walked Dudley. He wore a smirk on his face that showed he had more bad news.

"Guess who's here," he laughed.

A tall, redheaded boy walked in behind him and Hermione clutched onto Harry with every ounce of strength she had.

"No. No, no. Get him out of here," she hissed at Harry.

"OK," he whispered back.

He started to let go of her but she tightened her grip, if it was at all possible, "Don't leave me."

"Well, well, well. Look who's here. Hey, Mione," Ron grinned at her.

He started to walk father into the room. That was when she started to freak out. Her nails dug into Harry's arm as she started to cry harder than he had seen her do so before.

"No! Get him out! Get him away from me!" she screamed.

"Oh, come on, Mione. What we had was special," he was using a fake happy voice.

Harry felt his face scrunch up in anger. Hermione was pushing herself up the bed, closer to Harry with her feet.

"I think you should leave. Now!" Harry snarled at him.

"You stay out of this, Harry. The other day didn't include you," Ron waved him aside.

"No, it didn't. But when Hermione shows up at my front door in a broken mess, it does include me," his upper lip quivered as he stared Ron down.

"Now why would she do that after that wonderful time we had?" the smile never left his face.

"Ron, you raped her!" he yelled.

"Now, now, Harry. She didn't put up that much of a fight after I put that spell on her."

Harry felt his temper get dangerously high. He forced Hermione off of him and he ran at Ron. His fist collided with the side of his head.

"Get out! And don't expect me to come over to your house ever again!" he yelled at his form on the ground.

He walked back over to Hermione and tried to get her to stop shaking, "It's all right. I'm right here. He will never touch you again."

He looked back at Ron and saw him scurrying to his feet. He looked at Harry for a second then ran out of the door. There had been a hint of fear in his eyes. He knew Harry could hit harder and he didn't want to stay around to find out just how hard he could hit. Dudley then too ran out of the room.

He turned his focus back to Hermione who was hiding in her hands. He gently reached out and pulled her hands away from her face.

"It's OK. He's gone. I told you I wouldn't let him touch you," he lightly rubbed the top of her hand with his thumb.

Her eyes were extremely red. The sleeve of her shirt touched his hand. He looked down and noticed that it was soaking wet. He looked back at her and saw so much fear in her eyes, he could feel his heart break again.

He leaned forward and kissed her forehead. Then he pulled on her arms so he could hug her.

"Harry," she whimpered.

"I'm here," he rubbed her back.

"I don't want to go to school this year."

Oh no. I can't protect her there. What am I going to do?

Suddenly he stood up and walked over to his desk.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going to write Dumbledore. See if there's a way we can have separate rooms from everybody so that I can keep an eye on you at night. I'm not going to let him near you."

He started shuffling through papers trying to find a clean piece of parchment. He threw papers over his head to get them out of the way. Hermione had stopped crying and was watching him closely.

"Found one," he said to himself.

He grabbed his quill and ink and started writing quickly. Hermione stood up and walked over to him. She placed her hand on his shoulder and read over him. When he made to stand straight up she jumped and backed up.

He folded it up and slid it into an envelope. He placed it by the window for when Hedwig came back.

Harry turned back to her and gave her a warm smile, which she did not return. She still felt scared. He walked over to her and cupped her cheek in one hand.

"I'm scared he will come back knowing I'm here," she whispered.

He looked at her in concern. His head lowered to hers and he placed a light kiss on her lips.

"He will never touch you as long as I'm here," he whispered when he pulled away.

She felt his lips brush hers as he said this. She slowly closed the space between their lips and kissed him back. Though she did not pull away as quickly. Then she did.

She brushed her lips against his, "Thank you."

## Chapter 7:

### Confusion

Days went by and Hermione only got worse. The storm that haunted the city never left. When Harry heard her start to cry harder he could hear the wind and rain pick up.

She always made him stand outside the bathroom door when she took showers. He would grab a book and sit in the hallway until she was finished. She had always been scared that he would leave and do something else in-between her going in and coming out. But he never did.

Harry found himself sitting up with her every night as she cried into his chest. He didn't mind really, but when he fell asleep he knew she got worse.

He started to have his own nightmares about what happened. Each one worse than the previous. He would never ask her what happened. He did not want her to relive it. But he knew that when she did sleep, she relived it in her nightmares.

There was finally a night he fell asleep on the cot and she was sleeping well before he was. He didn't have a nightmare that night until he woke to her screaming and crying in her sleep.

He had to shake her awake and when he did she clutched onto his shirt with all her might. He had held her closely as he heard angry yells come from the rooms around them. Mainly from Marge.

Marge's last night there was almost over. Harry lay on his back staring at the ceiling thinking about how he could cheer Hermione up. He knew she wasn't asleep and could feel her eyes on him.

He stood up and walked over to the door. He had a rather bad urge to use the bathroom.

"Where are you going?" she asked, pushing herself up.

"To the bathroom," he whispered. "Can I not go to the bathroom?"

"I don't want to be alone," her eyes filled with tears.

"A couple options. One. You can go with me. I'd rather you didn't but that's the first option. Two. You wait here patiently and trust that I will be right back. Or three. I piss in the corner."

She slowly lowered her head and looked away from him. He sighed and walked out of the room. He didn't want to leave her in there by herself, but he really had to go.

He went as fast as he could. He walked back into his room and found her cowering in under the covers in a little ball. He felt his face crack into a smile and he walked over to her. He couldn't understand why it made him happy that he got to hold her when she was so terrified about everything. She was going through trauma and he was only concerned with holding her.

He sat down and pulled her to him. His feeling of happiness quickly faltered as she held his arm tightly in a fit of tears.

He was woken by the sound of his uncle's yelling, "Potter! Carry your Aunt Marge's things down to the front door!"

Harry shook the sleep from his eyes and slowly slid Hermione off of him and gently laid her head on the pillow. He pushed himself off of the bed as lightly as he could.

He practically tip toed to the door and closed it behind him. He walked groggily to the guest room and pushed the door open. His aunt glared at him as she picked her bags up.

"What took you so long?" she snapped.

She threw her bags at him and walked out of the room.

"What took you so long in leaving?" he murmured, rubbing his stomach.



He grabbed the handles and walked from the room. He looked down the stairs and noticed the front door open. His face broke into a grin and he chuckled the bags down the stairs into the wall. He turned around and saw Dudley staring at him.

"I'm going to tell them you did that," he sneered.

"Tell them. In fact do it now before she has a chance to leave. I really don't care," he rolled his eyes and walked back to his room.

He opened the door and heard Hermione gasp in fear, "It's all right. It's just me."

She looked up at him with tears filling her eyes, "I woke up and you were gone. I didn't know what was going on."

"Next time I'll leave you a note," he sat down next on the edge of the bed.

She grabbed his hand and stared at him through tears and fear. Her heart was aching. Her feelings confused her. She felt as though she loved Harry, but knew it couldn't be her true feelings. He was helping her, protecting her after what Ron had done to her. It couldn't be real. And then there was the hate and terror that filled her when he came to her thoughts. But she felt so safe in Harry's arms. She wanted to stay there and keep that feeling. She wanted the feeling of Harry holding but wanted to make space between them so she would not be hurt again.

But he won't hurt me. He promised he wouldn't. I'm so scared. I don't know what to feel or what feelings are real. Oh, Harry.

They sat like that for almost ten minutes. The entire time Harry watched her. Tears had rolled down her face as she had stared into his eyes. He couldn't watch her like that anymore and pulled her into a backbreaking hug.

He held her so gently but still closely. He didn't want her to feel pain anymore. He didn't want her scared anymore. He wanted to make all the pain and fear go away. But how could he do that?

Hermione wept into him as she held him back. She felt secure and safe from all harm. This was where she wanted to be. But then his face would float in front of her mind.

She forced her way out of his arms and crawled into a ball and hid her face from his in her hands. She didn't want him to watch her cry anymore.

I can't put him through this. I don't want to get close to him.

She kept telling herself that, but she still didn't believe it. How could she believe it when all she wanted was for him to hold her and the feeling of security to heighten?

Harry reached out a shaky hand to touch her shoulder, but changed his mind. That wasn't what she needed him to be doing. She had already been touched in a way she hadn't wanted to be. He didn't want her to think he was going to do the same. He instead used his hand to wipe away the tears that made their way down his cheeks.

She was breaking his heart. He couldn't watch her hide from him in a mess of tears. He stood up and walked towards the door. She made a muffled sound from the bed.

He stopped and tried to force back the tears, making his voice crack, "I'm sorry?"

Her hands came away from her faces just barely so he could hear her, "Please don't go."

"Why?" his voice cracked even more.

"I want you to stay with me," she blubbered.

"Hermione. I don't think you really want me to. You're fine for a second and then you start to freak out and pull away from me. What do you really want?" he couldn't hold them down anymore and they fell from his eyes.

"I don't want to be alone," her own voice cracked.

"Come on. I'll take you down to where my aunt is. You can stay with her. I know she won't mind. She actually cares about your safety which confuses me, 'cause she doesn't give a damn about mine," he sighed.

"I don't want to be down there with her though."

"What do you want then?"

"I don't want to be alone."

"I know that. But there has to be something else," he lifted his face to the ceiling to try and stop the tears.

"I want you to stay with me. No one else. Just you," she mumbled more to herself, scared as to what his reaction would be.

His head fell down onto his chest, "Then why do you pull away from me when I try to comfort you?"

He knew the answer, but he needed to hear it. He was hoping it wasn't something else.

"Because of him. He haunts me, Harry. I can't handle the touch of a boy because of him. I know you will never harm me, but I can't handle and I'm sorry."

She started to weep and Harry hurried over to her, "Shh. No. Don't be sorry. You have all right to be nervous about a boy touching you in even a friendly way after what he did to you. I should be sorry. I'm being selfish," he placed a sympathetic hand atop hers.

"How are you being selfish," she gasped out.

"I..." he stopped and swallowed, "You just have to trust me that I am."

She looked up at him, "Harry. How?"

"I just am," he muttered.

"Harry, I want to know. Please tell me," there were still tears in her eyes.

"It's not important. What's important is that you feel comfortable and safe," he stood up, letting go of her hand.

That wasn't something she wanted him to do. She watched him walk back towards the door. He looked out it and noticed Dudley standing just around the corner peering at him with this... look on his face.

Harry glared at him and pulled his head back into the room. He slowly started to shut the door, but stopped it just short of the door-jam.

"Dudley's planning something," he whispered, moving over to his desk quickly.

"What do you mean?" she breathed back.

"I don't know exactly, but whatever it is, it's not good," he picked up his wand and shoved it into his pocket. He looked back at her and saw her fear return, "I won't let him near you. You will never be harmed again. Not if I can help it."

He walked over to her and pulled her off the bed. He hugged her securely, making sure he held her to where no one would be able to rip her away and out of his arms.

She closed her eyes, but then they shot open when he appeared. Her nails dug into him as she held him back. She forced the tears away and tried to focus on nothing but Harry. This was who she wanted to be holding her and he was. She only had to make sure she knew that even if she closed her eyes.

She tried to keep her eyes closed but could not shake him of her thoughts. She looked up at Harry to reassure herself it was in fact him. His eyes were closed and she could see the tears leaking out of them.

How she wanted to kiss them away. But she knew she would never be able to. She refused to think the feelings she had were real. But then he looked down at her and she could see hidden love in them. He didn't want to hurt her and she knew it looking in those green, green eyes.

She let the tears fall, "Harry."

"Yeah?" he breathed out.

"I want you to be the only one to protect me," she murmured.

He let out a small breath and smiled at her weakly. His heart felt weak. All he wanted to do was keep her safe and she was still scared. There was still a threat he would not be able to keep under control for long. He loved her. He truly did. But he would never be able to bring himself to admit it the way he wanted to. She was too broken.

Before he could stop himself, he brought his head down to hers and kissed her. More than he knew he should have. He could feel her muscles shake slightly but she was kissing him back.

He pulled away. He hadn't meant for it to last that long. His breathing was shaky. He hadn't wanted to scare her. Hoping he hadn't he let go of her and took a step back.

"I'm sorry," he breathed without asking her how she had felt about it.

She gazed at him with her mouth slightly open and her head cocked to the side. Her eyes had no fear in them and she did not look bothered with what he had just done. Slowly her face altered into a very small, almost hidden smile.

She quickly changed her expression and gently whispered back, "No. Its fine."

"I don't want to scare you though," he did not hide the worry in his voice, but did try to keep kindness in it.

"You didn't," she said, tenderly.

He felt his features jump into an almost shocked look. He looked down to the floor just right of her. He didn't want to do this to her. He felt as though he were giving her false hope.

"But its not false," he said under his breath.

Her brow furrowed, "What's not?"

His gaze fell back upon her, his voice still soft to where she could just hear him, "The hope I'm giving you."

Her features softened and she looked into his eyes, seeing his heart like an open book, "Oh, Harry."

She walked over to him, but stopped just short of him. Suddenly she was full of dread. She felt they were getting to close. Something was going to happen she didn't want to happen. She started to back away.

"Hermione? What's wrong?" he asked.

He looked at her for a second and in a flash knew what she was thinking. He took a few steps back to keep her from worrying anymore.

"That's not going to happen. I swear that will not happen. I won't let it happen," he said as gently as he could.

"Ever?" she choked.

"What?"

"It won't ever happen?" she tried keep her voice strong, but wasn't succeeding.

"Do you want it to happen?" his asked, baffled at her question.

She looked away. Her fear came back. She knew she didn't want to think about that sort of thing. Not now and at the moment, not ever.

But she had such strong feelings for Harry she didn't know what to do or say.

Her voice worked on its own, "Eventually. I don't... I really don't want to think about that sort of thing but eventually I know I'll be OK with it. But not know..." her mouth was speaking everything she meant to think to herself, "I'm so scared right now. I don't know what..."

"Hermione!" Harry raised his voice to get her to stop.

She did and looked up at him. There was terror on her face and worry in her eyes.

"Then don't think about that. There's nothing really going on between us. Is there?"

"I don't know," she breathed.

"I don't either, but if there's not that not something I want you to be thinking about. It will only scare you more and that's definitely not something I'm thinking about. Something I will never think about. Maybe later... much later, but never now. Not when there is still fear in you and a threat from those around us. I don't want you to be scared of me. I don't want you thinking about that. I don't want you harmed," his voice had steadily raised itself into a yell.

He hadn't meant to. He turned away from her and a hushed, "I'm sorry," and sat down at his desk. He buried his face in his arms and started crying. He felt he had ruined the security he had given her.

"I shouldn't have kissed you. I'm sorry I did. I'm really, truly sorry. I don't want you to be scared that I will do anything to you. I know you are so don't try and tell me you're not. Don't try and make me feel better about kissing you because I never will. I gave you more to be scared of from that kiss. I can see it in your eyes. Maybe it's a good thing that my aunt is finally leaving today. Now you can have a room back to yourself and you won't be as afraid that I'll do something because of that damn kiss. I hate seeing fear in your eyes. I hate it! I can't stand it! And knowing that I have caused some of it just know is making me wish I had never done it and I wasn't getting these damn

feelings for you after what you had to go through. I'm sorry," he ranted.

He was crying hard now. Hermione tried to think of something that would make it better for both of them. He was right though. She was now scared of him though she knew he would never touch her in that way. Not only because of what she had gone through, but because she knew he was too much of a gentleman to think that way. She felt the fear leave her.

"I'm not that scared of you though."

"Please don't lie to me," he sobbed.

"But I'm not lying. There is a difference in you that makes everything OK," she whispered gently.

"Which is what?" he pulled his head from his arms, revealing bloodshot eyes.

"You're gentle. He... he wasn't," her voice started to shake as she thought back on it. "He was rough... he didn't care..."

Harry stood up and walked over to her with speed. He pulled her into his arms and held her gently. It was the first time he had noticed this.

"Hermione, shut up! I don't want you to think about that. I never want you to think about that. I'm not trying to order you to not think about it. I'm just saying that I don't want you to. I want you to think happy thoughts, if there are any left in you. I want to make you feel safe. I want to make your fears go away. Please don't think about him. Think about something. Anything that will make you happy," he tried to keep his voice soft but started to feel hate towards Ron and now himself.

"Harry. The only thing that makes me happy is when I'm with you. But there are things that remind me of that day that I can't push from my mind. I don't want to be afraid of you because I know you won't hurt me or touch me in any other way than you are now. I'm not afraid of you until I see his face in my head. But Harry. I feel so safe in your arms. As long as he stays out of my thoughts I know I will be fine



around you. I just can't get his touch out of my head or his face and it haunts me in my sleep. Last night I was able to sleep fine for once. And I know it was because you were making sure I was safe. I knew you wouldn't let me be hurt. I know you love me, Harry. More than you want to let on. That does scare me though because I feel as though I love you, too. With the same amount as you, but I can't let us get too close. My body and head are forcing me to stay away from you, but my heart won't let me. I only want you to hold me and make me feel safe. I want to know you love me, but I wish it had been a longer time between when it happened and when we started feeling like this. I'm too scared right now to let there be anything there. If I sense that something may be on its way to happening when I know it won't because it's you I still force myself to get away from you. I have to make space between us when I do that but that's not what my heart wants me to do. So when I do move away from you know it's only because it's so soon after that damn day, that that space must be there. For my own awareness of safety. I can't let myself have that feeling. When I look at you I feel better because I know it is you. I can see it is you. When you hold me I wish I could just close my eyes and only feel that it is you, but his touch is overpowering and it forces me to break away and reassure myself it is you. I hate that I must do that, but you must understand..."

He suddenly leaned down and planted a very soft kiss on her lips. He wanted to shut her up, but not scare her at the same time. He pulled away slowly and smiled at her.

"Shut up already," he laughed. "I get the point. I don't need you to explain everything to me. I can see most of it in your eyes and I know how to interpret it all. I just want you to feel safe and happy. The way I can make sure of that is by trying to keep you from thinking about that and keeping you from talking about it. When you don't talk about it I feel better, but I know you are still thinking about it. I don't want you to. I know it's very hard for you not to and I know it will haunt you for a very long time, but..."

It was his turn to be interrupted by a kiss. He jumped a little at first because it was her that did it, but kissed her back when he got over the shock. She pulled away and laughed lightly.

“Weren’t expecting that were you?” there was still a hint of fear in her eyes, but hearing what he had said calmed her extremely.

“When’d you get that bold?” he laughed back.

“When I started feeling exceptionally comfortable with you. Even with what I went through I still enjoy doing that. But we still have to have space. In fact I’m starting to…” before she could continue he let go of her and took a few steps back.

He smiled warmly at her, “Anything to make you feel comfortable.”

His cheeks had turned a soft shade of pink as he gazed at her. It was a gaze she had never seen from him before. She liked it. His eyes remained with hers the entire time. He was making her feel so secure at that moment.

“Harry?” she said, a different thought popping into her head.

“Yeah?” he asked faintly.

“If I’m going to stay here I need to go get my Hogwarts stuff from home and some clean clothes,” she said.

He started to laugh a little, “All right. Hopefully my uncle will take us. Come on.”

His hands slid down her arms as he let go of her. One hand fell to his side and the other made its way into her hand. He smiled warmly at her and started to head for the door, pulling her with him.

Her eyes filled with tears, but different ones than she was used to. They were happy tears. He showed her so much care and warmth in his eyes she couldn’t help but feel a sudden wave of happiness overflow her.

They walked down the stairs quietly and into the living room where they found Mr. Dursley watching the morning news. They walked up beside him and waited for a commercial to come on the screen.

“Uncle Vernon?” Harry asked cautiously.

“What is it, Boy?” he answered.

“We were wondering if you wouldn’t mind driving us to her house so she can get her stuff safely?” he remained cautious.

He let out a long sigh, “Fine. Now?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Fine. Go get in the car. I’ll be there in a second,” he grabbed the remote and turned the TV off.

Harry walked off with Hermione to the sound of his uncle grunting as he stood up, “Petunia! Where are my keys?”

He walked over to the car and opened the back door. He held out his hand for her to get in and climbed in after she got settled. He closed the door and sat a seat away from her. She moved over next to him and grabbed his arm.

He tilted his head to look at her. There was terror in her eyes again.

“What’s the matter?” he asked her.

“I’m fine. It’s just we’re out in the open and I’m just a little nervous,” she said in a small hiss.

He placed a loving hand on top of hers and caressed it lightly, “I won’t let anything bad happen to you. If anyone gets near you, I’ll blast them with a spell.”

She smiled shyly up at him, “Harry, you’re still in your pajamas.”

He laughed a little, “It’s better that than changing with you in the room. You didn’t want me to leave you alone so I didn’t. I was thinking about dressing while you were asleep, but I was uncomfortable with that. Plus you could have woken up just as I was pulling something off. Not something either of us would like.”

“No. I would have probably thought you were going to do something to me,” she did not smile back.

“Hermione. Please don’t start crying again. I hate seeing you cry.”

She nodded and clutched his arm tighter trying to choke down the tears that wanted to consume her. Her eyes were shut tight.

The driver’s door opened and her eyes shot open, “All right. Ready?”

Harry nodded at Mr. Dursley and continued to caress Hermione’s hand. Her head rested on his shoulder as they drove off.

She seemed to take a nap as they made their way to her house. He had to shake her to get her to move when they turned into her driveway. She looked around and yawned.

Harry opened the door and stepped out. He held out his hand and helped her out of the car, catching her when she almost fell.

“Uncle Vernon, will you come in with us and wait in the living room while we get her stuff? I don’t want to make her carry her trunk.”

“Fine.”

They walked over to the front door and she opened it without unlocking it. She made Harry walk in first to make sure it was safe. When she was sure it was, she walked in after him. They heard his uncle plop down on the couch.

She led him to her room and she went about everything quickly. She grabbed a bag and shoved it full of clean clothes. Then she gestured him over to her trunk.

He took a quick glance around. The bed was a complete mess. He knew why and felt his heart twinge at the sight. He helped her carry the trunk into the living room and his uncle got up. He helped him get it out to the car.

Hermione sat close to him the whole back. She kept glancing out the window and clinging onto him as though for dear life.

They climbed out and Harry walked Hermione back into the house and left her with his aunt as he helped his uncle. They got everything into the guestroom and Harry asked him to tell Hermione that he would be down in a minute. He felt he really needed a shower.

He stayed in the shower longer than he had hoped. He had to think some things over. He got dressed quickly and headed down stairs.

He walked into the living room and saw his aunt's arm around Hermione. Her legs were up on the couch and she was leaning into his aunt. She looked up at him when he walked in and gave him a very warm smile. He looked around and saw something missing.

"Where's Dudley?"

"He went to a friends house. Get out of the way of the news!" his aunt snapped.

He rolled his eyes and walked over to sit next to Hermione. His aunt released her. She moved over to Harry and grabbed his arm gently. She slowly gripped him tighter as bad thoughts of him came to her. Tears came to her eyes.

His hand rested on hers again. Steadily she started to calm down.

That night Harry put her to bed and made sure she was asleep before he left. He placed a small note on the nightstand say that he had gone to bed for when she woke up. He locked the door using magic.

He crawled in bed with a smile on his face, "I truly do love you, Hermione."

A/N: Finally he admits it. lol Please review!

## Chapter 8:

### The Letters

Hedwig tapped her beak on Harry's forehead, forcing him to wake up. He swung his hand at her and rolled over. She merely flapped her wings and pecked the back of his head.

"Fine!" he yelled.

He pushed himself up and pulled on his glasses. He glared at Hedwig for a second then took the letter from her leg with annoyance. He unfolded it and saw another one lying on top of it. His brow furrowed as he looked at them. One was from Hermione's parents of course, but the other was from... Molly Weasley.

His jaw fell open. Why would she be writing him? He quickly ripped open the envelope and snatched the paper out. He jumped out of bed as he read and quickly changed, knocking himself to the floor when he tried to pull his pants up with one hand.

He finally managed to get dressed properly after noticing his shirt was on backwards. He grabbed his wand and the letter from Hermione's parents and walked over to her room. He unlocked the door and knocked before entering.

"Come in," her muffled voice called.

He could hear fear in it as he walked in. She was sitting on the bed reading his note he had left her the night before.

"I got scared when I noticed you were gone. Then I saw the note," she smiled warmly at him. "I'm glad you remembered."

"I would never forget anything that would make you feel better. I want you feeling safe," he smiled back.

"Harry? How am I managing to be so calm when I'm around you? Why do I not freak out as much anymore?" she asked softly.

"I don't know. Probably because you have trusted me as long as you've known me. Because I have never argued with you or harmed you as long as you've known me. Because I'm gentle as you managed to inform me yesterday, making me actually notice just how gentle I really was with you. Because you know I love you," he whispered the last part with a large smile.

"You're going to admit it now?" her voice lowered to a quiet tone.

"I don't want to try and deny it any longer," he continued to smile at her.

"And why is that?"

"Because if you deny it, it will eventually eat you up inside. Plus. I want you to smile like that more. No more tears. I like seeing you smile. It... don't laugh... it warms my heart to see it," he watched her closely as though daring her to laugh.

She bit down on her lips trying to hide her smile, but he could see the laugh in her eyes. He had learned to read them with ease.

"I said don't laugh," he said in a fact whine.

"I'm sorry. But I actually wasn't laugh at you. It was more at the fact that I feel the exact same way," she laughed. "I still want to understand why I'm so OK around you. I realize all the things you said are true, but that still doesn't explain why I'm fine after what happened to me."

She stopped and took in a shaky breath and tried to shake the tears away. It wasn't working. She brought her hand up and started to wipe them away. Then a hand grabbed hers and the other wiped them away for her.

"It's OK, Hermione. I'm right here. Oh. And I have to show you something," he whispered in her ear.

He grabbed a piece of paper off of the nightstand and handed it to her. He watched her read the letter and watched her eyes grow large. She dropped the letter and looked at Harry through tears.

“Why are you crying? This is a good thing!” he grabbed her hands again and placed them in her lap.

“I’m crying because I’m so relieved. They locked him up! His own parents! Because my parents wrote to them and told them! Harry. I’m so confused,” she suddenly laughed.

He started to laugh with her, “What! Why?”

“His own parents. His parents! I wouldn’t think they would lock up their own son. As much as I’m glad they did. What?” she continued to laugh.

He shook his head and grabbed the other letter, “Your parents wrote back. I haven’t read that yet. I was so shocked to get one from Mrs. Weasley that I read that as fast as I could. I fell over trying to get dressed so I could show you.”

She started laughing louder and grabbed his hand, “Harry!”

“Don’t make fun of me. I want you to read this first,” he placed the letter on her lap and walked over to get the chair.

He placed it next to the bed and saw tears swell in her eyes as she read. He reached his hand up and brushed them off her cheeks. He looked at her and focused on each and every facial change she had.

She stopped reading and he spoke, “You all right?”

“They want to know exactly what happened,” she choked out.

Her head leaned down and rested on his shoulder. She started to cry softly in his ears. He placed his hand on her back and started to rub it gently.



“Harry, I don’t want to think about that. I just want to think about you,” she breathed.

His emotions started to feel confused. He was honored and happy that she wanted to think about him, but he also didn’t want her to feel any pain. He shut his eyes for a second.

“I don’t want you to relive that day,” he whispered ever so gently in her ear. “If you’d like, I’ll write them back and explain that to them.”

He felt her nod and took the letter out of her hands. He placed it on the nightstand and wrapped both arms around her. He held her gently and calmed her almost instantly.

She looked at him through her tears and smiled, “How do you manage to make everything all right?”

He smiled at her and shrugged, “I couldn’t tell you. It doesn’t make any sense, does it?”

“No. You’re only going to get some parchment right?” she asked as he started to walk away.

“Of course. I won’t leave you alone for long. I promise.”

“I know,” she smiled.

He walked to his room with a smile on his face. He grabbed all the things he needed and headed back to her room. She was still smiling when he walked back in.

“I still want to know how you make things seem so... OK. I want to understand it all,” she laughed.

“I know. I do, too. I don’t get it,” he placed all his things down and sat on the edge of the bed.

He looked at her for a second and smiled. He wanted to kiss her so badly, but didn’t want to scare her in anyway. As though she were reading his thoughts, she placed a small kiss on his lips.

“God! Why am I so damn comfortable with you! This is insane!” she laughed.

Harry chuckled at her and moved down to the chair. He pulled it over to the nightstand and started to write to her parents.

After about ten minutes he handed it to her and asked, “How’s that?”

She read over it and forced herself not to cry, “Thank you.”

“For what? Writing to your parents?” he asked, baffled.

“No, for understanding perfectly. You confuse me so,” sadness was back in her eyes.

“How do I confuse you?”

“You understand perfectly. You make me feel so safe. You make everything fine when I thought I would never be OK with this. You confuse me.”

“Oh, Hermione. I love you. I will always understand you, but I will never understand how you are already getting OK with all this shit,” his tender smile calmed her.

She placed her hand on his cheek and caressed it with her thumb, “I love you so much, Harry. And know that it is the truth.”

“I do know. I can read it in your eyes,” he whispered softly.

He slowly leaned up and kissed her. He pulled away and smiled at her.

“You’re weird, Harry,” she smiled.

He let out a snort, “What?”

“Just trust me. You’re weird,” she laughed at him.

"If you say so," he shook his head.

He grabbed her hand and helped her out of bed. He watched to make sure her feet were securely on the ground before he started to walk. He grabbed his letter to her parents and headed for his room.

They shut the door and walked over to Hedwig. Hermione grabbed the letter to Dumbledore and handed it to Harry. He smiled at her when he took it from her. He made sure their fingers touched when he did. He saw her turn a soft shade of pink.

He laughed and tied the two letters to Hedwig's leg, "Take these to her parents and Professor Dumbledore!"

They watched her fly out the window. Hermione eyed the closed door with caution. She eyed the boy that she was shut in the room with and felt herself relax. It's only Harry. He won't ever harm me.

"What's with the look?" he asked when he turned back to her.

She snapped back to her senses, "What look?"

"The one that just left your face. Your eyes were all glazed over and you were staring at me," he narrowed his eyes at her and laughed.

"I just..." she turned away and blushed.

"I really want to know how you're OK around me now," he whispered.

"Trust me. So do I. It really doesn't make any sense," her brow furrowed as she walked over to his bed.

Harry watched her sit down and he grabbed the chair at his desk. He pulled it over to his bed and sat down in front of her. He slowly grabbed her hands and kissed each of them.

She smiled at him, "I really do love you, Harry."

"I love you, too, Hermione," he laughed.

He let their hands fall between them and continued to smile at her. She started rubbing his hands with her thumbs.

"I feel so safe with you," she whispered rather quietly.

"I know. I'm glad. I only want you to feel safe," he whispered right back. He saw a tear come to her eyes, "What's the matter?"

"No. I'm fine. They're tears of joy. Trust me," she blushed.

"Good," he smiled.

He let go of one of her hands and brushed his thumb across her cheek to wipe the tears away. They heard the door open when he did so.

He turned to look at his uncle, "What?"

He let his hand fall down to his lap and let go of her other hand.

"We're taking Dudley out for his birthday. Do you want to go?" he asked through gritted teeth.

"Hermione?" Harry asked, turning to her.

He jumped a little when he saw fear in her eyes. Tears were streaming down her face. He gave her a quizzical look.

Mr. Dursley walked into the room, "Is everything all right?"

"Do you want to go?" Harry spoke softly to try and calm her down.

She merely nodded her head.

"OK. Get dressed. Dudley is waiting. Hurry up," his uncle walked from the room.

He watched him leave, then he turned back to Hermione, "What's up?"

She shook her head and stood up, "Just walk me to my room please."

"All right."

He let her take his hand in hers and walked with her. He told her to lock the door and he would wait outside for her.

He heard a loud bang come from inside the room, "Hermione? You all right?"

"I'm fine," she called.

Finally she opened the door, "Are you sure you're all right?"

"Yeah. I just closed my trunk too loud," she mumbled.

"I don't mean that," he stopped her from walking any farther down the hall. "What made you start crying back in my room?"

She shook her head, then rested it on his shoulder.

"Hermione. Tell me!"

"It's just the thought of them going without us," she whispered.

"What?" he said more to himself.

He looked down at her but more through her than at her. Then it clicked.

"Oh, Hermione. I wouldn't do anything if we were here alone," he whispered.

"I know you wouldn't. It just reminded me of..." she shook her head.

"Shh. It's OK. Don't think about that. Shh," he placed his arm around her and rubbed her back.

"It's not that I don't trust you. It's just that it reminds me of..."

“No. I understand. Don’t think about it. Please try not to,” he whispered in her ear.

She nodded on his shoulder and lifted her head. She allowed him to wipe away her tears. Then he grabbed her hand and got her to walk down the stairs.

“Took you long enough,” his uncle snapped.

Harry rolled his eyes and walked out the front door with Hermione holding onto him with a powerful grip. He looked at the backseat and saw his aunt sitting back there. Dudley was sitting in the front.

He walked around the car and opened the door for Hermione. She slowly let go of him and got it. He sat down next to her and closed the door.

The day had gone by better than Harry had expected. Dudley had wanted to go to a theme park and he was surprised he had been offered to come. His uncle allowed him and Hermione to go off on their own away from Dudley. She didn’t really get any better. The entire time they sat at the far end of the park with Harry comforting her.

When they got back Hermione went into the guest room and shut the door. Harry stood outside the door confused.

“Hermione?” he called through the door.

“I’m just going to take a nap,” she called back.

He heard the lock click and sighed. He walked over to his room and saw Hedwig fly onto his bed.

“That was fast,” he said to her.

He stroked her feathers as he took the letters from her. He read over them. Twice to make sure he had read them correctly.

Dumbledore had agreed to letting them have their own room. He also wanted to know more about what had happened. Harry didn't know when Hermione would be able to tell more or even when he wanted to hear more.

He looked towards the hall and wondered how Hermione was doing. He picked up their letters and walked over to her door. He was just about to knock when he heard her sobbing on the other side.

His heart fell to pieces. She was getting worse. And he didn't know what to do.

## Chapter 9:

### Summer Ends

As the summer continued she got worse and worse. She would be fine with him if they were alone all day, but if they went out in the open she would go into her room after coming in. Harry was becoming concerned with what was happening to her. He tried to talk to her about it but she never did.

Harry had to threaten Dudley to keep him away from Hermione, "If I ever see you go near her or even look at her again, I will not hesitate to hex you into a complete pig. Permanently."

He waved his wand in front of his face while he said this. Dudley had turned a strong shade of red and ran off when Harry had released his shirt. His aunt and uncle never got on him about it. Dudley had never said anything to them. He was too frightened.

He never had to threaten him again. He was going to keep his promise to Hermione to always keep her safe and never let anyone touch her again.

He stayed up with her on the nights she couldn't sleep. He would hold her as she cried, making her feel safe.

Then the day to go to Hogwarts came. Hermione was starting to get nervous. Harry helped her pack her trunk.

"It'll be OK. Dumbledore agreed to give us separate rooms near each other so that I can watch over you. I'm going to walk you to every class. I'll make sure you're safe. I promise," he reassured her.

"I know that. It's just... I don't want to be around others just yet. And I definitely don't want others knowing what happened," she said in a shaky breath.

"I know. I don't think others know. I don't even think Ginny and them know. I know her parents do but I don't think they told any of their



kids. Come on. I'll keep you safe. No one will touch you. I swear on my own life," he rested his hand on hers when they closed her trunk.

"Please do," she whispered. "I don't want to go, Harry."

He walked around the trunk and wrapped his arms around her, "No one will harm you. I won't allow it." He leaned down and kissed her softly, "Believe me."

"I do," she smiled. "I love you, Harry."

She rested her head against his chest and let out a long sigh. He smiled and stroked her hair lightly.

"I love you, too," he kissed her on the top of her head. "We should probably get going. If you want we can try and get a compartment to ourselves on the train," she nodded, "Then we should get going so we can make sure we do."

She lifted her head and he wiped her tears away. She gave off a small laugh and slowly backed away.

"Hold on," he pulled her back and gave her a tight squeeze before he let her go.

He helped her carry her trunk down the stairs and out to the car. They managed to fit it in the trunk on top of his and they climbed in the back of the car. His uncle was already sitting in the driver's seat.

"Ready?" he asked grumpily.

"Yeah."

Harry wanted to wrap his arm around Hermione when they got to the station. She started to get really nervous and walked as close to him as she could manage. She was able to push her own trunk but would not let Harry get a step ahead of her or behind her.

They walked through the barrier together and she made him get on the train quickly. People had been saying hello to him left and right. He only had time to smile and nod at all of them.

They found a cabin far away from those that had already seated themselves. Harry let her go in first and slid the door shut after he walked in. She was still standing when he sat down. He grabbed her hand and pulled her down next to him. He finally allowed himself to place his arm around her.

“Everything will be fine. I promise,” he whispered gently in her ear. “No one will touch you. I won’t let them. I’ll keep you safe.”

“I know. I’m just so scared right now.”

“I know. But it will be fine. I can look after you. Plus there will be teachers and Dumbledore. Everything will be fine. You know I’ll make sure of that,” he said warmly.

She smiled but didn’t say anything. She was staring out the window at all the people.

“They won’t touch you,” he wrapped his other arm around her and held her closely.

She leaned against him and sighed, “Please don’t let them.”

“You know I won’t.”

They heard the whistle blow and she jumped. People started to board the train. She started to shake a little.

“It’s OK. Everything’s fine. Breathe and relax,” he whispered.

People were running passed their compartment trying to find one with their friends in it. Hermione was clinging onto Harry’s arm as she watched them. There was fear in her eyes again.

Then Ginny stopped outside their compartment and waved. She reached for the handle on the door, but Harry shook his head. She gave him a funny look then turned to face someone behind her. She started walking again as the boy she had looked at walked passed the window in the door.

“What is he doing here?” Hermione jumped and held onto him tighter as Ron walked by.

He didn’t look in at them, but straight ahead of him. He looked angry but pale.

Harry glared at him while he passed, “I don’t think they’re going to make him miss school.”

“Why?” she tried to hide behind him.

He looked down at her after shaking his head at Neville who had tried to join them, “I don’t know. They know you’re here. It doesn’t make any sense. He won’t come near you. He knows if he does I will kill him. I won’t let him touch you. I promise you on my life. He will never come near you again. Never!”

She let out a small sob and moved even closer to him. The train pulled away and the final students made their way to where their friends were sitting. Harry rubbed her arm to try and calm her down.

They rolled passed trees and valleys. She cried into his arm for what had felt and probably been hours. She started to relax a little but continued to cry. Then the train stopped.

“I don’t want to be here, Harry,” she cried.

He wiped his fingers across her face and cleared it of her tears. They threw on their robes and headed off the train. Neville ran up to them when they stepped off.

“What’s up?” he asked looking at Hermione’s fear filled face.

She shook her head and pulled Harry over to a carriage. Neville followed them and sat across from Harry when they all got in. No one else got in with them and they headed up to the castle.

“What’s going on?” he asked again.

“Don’t ask,” Harry said to him.

The carriage stopped and they got out. Neville walked up the stair with them. He glanced at Hermione a couple times to see if he could figure out what was wrong, but he couldn’t tell.

Dumbledore walked up to them, “Harry, Hermione. May I speak with you?”

They both nodded and said goodnight to Neville. Harry knew this would not be a short talk. They followed him up to his office and they sat down when he told them to.

“I must know if this has really happened,” he said calmly.

Harry looked from him to Hermione then back, “Look at her and tell me if you really believe it didn’t.”

He closed his eyes, “Harry, please remain calm. I just have to make sure it is the real reason you to want separate rooms. I was once a teenager and know what goes through their heads.”

“Professor! I would never lie to you. Maybe other teachers to get out of trouble, but not you. Hermione has been freaking out all day about coming here and being around all these people and guys. There is no other reason that I would ask for that. I have been watching over her all summer. The only thing I care about right now is that she is OK and feels safe,” Harry had stood up.

“Harry. I understand that. I really do. There are just some things I need to be completely sure of. I am headmaster and I can’t have students finding ways around the rules to do... inappropriate things,”

he sighed and turned to Hermione, "I would like to talk with you privately. That is if it's OK with Harry," he gave a small laugh.

Harry walked over to Hermione and kneeled down, placing a soft hand on her shoulder, "Are you OK with that?"

She nodded, "It's Professor Dumbledore. I'll be fine."

"OK. Is it all right if I wait outside the door?" he asked Dumbledore.

"That's fine. I prefer that you do. You seem to be her bodyguard and she's comfortable with you touching her. I think it's best if you stay with her at all times. And I mean during the day," he gave Harry a warning look.

Harry laughed a little and stood up. He opened the door and walked out of the room. He could feel Dumbledore's eyes on him. He shut the door and leaned his back against it.

He couldn't hear anything they were saying. He wasn't trying to hear, but he wanted to make sure Hermione was all right. It was all he cared about.

He started to pace around after a bit. It was taking a long time. He felt as though she needed him in there with her. At least he wanted to be in there with her.

Then he heard her start sobbing on the other side of the door. His hand shot to the doorknob but he knew he wasn't allowed in just yet. His heart was breaking just standing there. He wanted to go and hold her. He wanted to get her to stop crying and make her feel better.

"I want Harry," he heard her sob out.

His hand went back to the knob and the door opened. Dumbledore was looking at him with sadness in his eyes. He heard her sob again and he ran over to her. He wrapped his arms around her as she fell onto his shoulder in a mess.

“Do you believe me now?” he snapped at Dumbledore, rubbing Hermione on the back.

“I do. And I’m sorry for questioning you. I’m almost sorry I heard what I did,” he had walked back over to his desk and was watching them.

“What did you make her say?” he was almost glaring at him.

“I asked her to tell me what all happened. I’m sorry for not trusting you right off about this. I truly am,” he whispered.

“Professor. I haven’t even made her tell me what exactly happened. I don’t want her thinking about that. Please don’t make her think about that.”

“I’m sorry, Harry. Here. I’ll show you where you two will stay,” he walked over to the door and waited for them to follow. “I’ve arranged Dobby to send up a meal for you two so she won’t have to be around all those people.”

Harry stood up and forced her hands off of his sleeve. He held onto one and helped her up. Then they followed Dumbledore to the Gryffindor common room.

He led them down a flight of stairs that was behind the tapestry on the right-hand side on the common room. When they reached the bottom of the many stairs they found themselves in a small looking common room.

He walked over to two doors, “Your doors are right next to each other. If you need a door connecting your rooms you may add one. I’m sure you know the spell to make one appear, Hermione. Now. No one knows this is down here. Even the prefects and head boy and girl. This is only for very important use. It hasn’t been used for many, many years. Please do not tell anyone it is here. It would be best that you keep it a secret so you will not feel as though anyone would come down and do anything to you. I trust this will do?”

Both Harry and Hermione nodded. She was holding onto Harry's hand so tightly her knuckles were white and his fingers had fallen asleep.

"All right. Harry, your stuff has been put in the room on the left and Hermione, yours is in the right room. Dobby should be up any second now with some dinner for you. I must get down to the feast now. I do hope you feel safe in here, Hermione."

She nodded and stared at the floor. Her other hand had made its way to squeezing Harry's arm.

"I feel I must warn the other teachers, but only if you want me too."

"You may tell Professors McGonagall and Flitwick, but I don't think she wants any of the others knowing. She is somewhat close with them, so it only makes sense," Harry answered for her.

He couldn't figure it out but he knew that's what she wanted. Almost as though he could read her mind. They both looked at her and saw her nodding.

"All right. But I do expect you to be in class and at breakfast so you can get your schedules. It was your choice to return and since you have I expect you in class."

She just continued to nod. They watched Dumbledore walk out of the room.

Harry pulled her over to the couch that was in front of the fireplace and got her to sit down. He could not feel his entire arm at this point. He didn't want to say anything because he wanted to let her do what she wanted and needed. He felt her ease up and a strange feeling ran through his arms.

She leaned up against him and started to cry again. He rested his head atop hers and tried to comfort her with the hand that did have feeling in it. He pushed her tears away and placed a small kiss on her head.

There was a loud pop behind them and she jumped, squeezing both his hand and his arm even harder. They turned around and saw Dobby placing a large tray of food on the table that was in the middle.

“Good evening Mr. Harry Potter sir!” he squeaked. He walked over to them and placed his hand on top of Hermione’s, “Dobby is sorry for what has happened to Harry Potter’s bestest friend. Dobby hopes you feel better soon, Miss.”

He gave both of them a smile and disappeared with another pop. Harry looked at Hermione for a second. Suddenly she stood up and started to walk around the couch, taking Harry with her. She pulled one of the chairs next to another and sat down in one. She pulled on Harry’s hand to get him to sit down in the other next to her.

There was quite a bit of food on the tray. It didn’t seem possible that Dobby had managed to carry it at all.

Hermione had slowly released his hand and started to get some food. He shook it out a few times to try and get the feeling back in it. She gave him a weird look when she noticed.

He laughed slightly, “It fell asleep.”

“Sorry,” she mumbled and looked away from him.

“No. No, it’s fine. Whatever you want to do, do. Whatever makes you feel safe. I only want you to feel safe,” he gave her a smile to show he really didn’t mind.

She laughed a little and finished getting all the food she wanted. He almost asked her if she was hungry but remembered that they hadn’t eaten on the train at all. He laughed again and started to get some food for himself.

They eat in silence. Hermione let out a few shaky breaths but never started crying again. Harry would rub her hand when he heard her do so. She would smile at him and continue eating.



They finished eating and he sat back in his chair and yawned. Hermione was looking at the table intently. He placed his hand on her shoulder and she looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

“What’s the matter?” he asked softly, his voice cracking a little after its long silence.

“I want to tell you what happened,” she breathed.

His eyes grew large, “No! No, I don’t want to know!”

“But, Harry. I need you to know,” she turned in her chair to look him straight in the face.

He stood up and took a few steps back, “Hermione, I really don’t want to know. Why do you need me to know?”

She remained seated, “So that I know you do understand perfectly and know why I feel so safe with you when I should still probably be scared like I am of others.”

He looked at her for a second. He really did not want to know. He didn’t want to be able to visualize it. Then he thought that she had to relive it every time she thought about it. He sat back down and took her hands in his.

“Then tell me,” he whispered.

She mouthed a thank you then tried to calm herself enough to tell him, “All right. You know I don’t want to think about this, but when I start crying please don’t tell me to stop talking. I need to just get it all out at once.”

“I won’t. I promise. Please tell me,” his breathing was shaky.

She took in a deep breath, “All right. Well, as you know. I was home alone and he came to get me so I could go over to his and Ginny’s house. He asked me if my parents were home and I really did just

think he was being observant. I told him no because it was true. He was just like, 'Ah,' and looked casual. It didn't even cross my mind that he might do something. That's not the sort of thing I have ever thought about. But then he said we should go get my trunk. I was watching the news because everything else bores me and there was nothing else to do. I told him all right and turn the TV off. We walked to my room and I went over to my trunk. I grabbed the handle and looked up. He was locking the door," she took in a shaky breath, "I asked him what he was doing but he didn't say anything. Then he asked me why I didn't like him that way. I told him because I just never had any feels like that towards him. He was walking towards me and I started to get scared. I wasn't sure what he was going to do. I thought he was going to hex me but that was it. I started to inch my way across the wall towards the door. He slammed his hand before me and asked me what my hurry was. I told him I felt uncomfortable. He said I shouldn't but then his other hand came up and touched my face. He said, 'Mione, you have no need to fear me. I won't be too rough.' I asked him what the hell he was talking about and then he tried to kiss me," tears had started to fall down her face, "I yelled at him and then he grabbed my arms. He threw me onto my bed and jumped on top of me," she stopped for a second.

Harry almost said for her to stop, but stopped himself instead as she continued, "I smacked him hard across the face and tried to crawl away from him. He pinned down my arms and I started kicking him as hard as I could. He let go of one arm to get his wand and I punched him harder than I thought I could across his face. He just shook his head and put a spell I've never heard of on me. I couldn't move. All my muscles were relaxed but I could still talk. I yelled at him to stop what he was doing and that he was being stupid. He stood up and removed all my clothes with his wand," she started to choke on her words as she started to cry harder, "I started screaming as loud as I could, hoping that one of the neighbors would hear me. Then he removed his clothes and..." she couldn't talk anymore and had to forced herself to breath.

Harry pulled her over to him and hugged her tightly. He had tears in his own eyes. He didn't want to hear anymore and hoped that she would stop. She was hugging him back and crying rather hard. She forced herself to calm down a little bit and shuddered under his arms.

Then she continued causing him to close his eyes in pain, "He was rough and it already hurts girls the first time they... you know. He only made it worse. I was crying and screaming for him to stop. He grabbed me in a certain area and I started crying harder. He was very, very rough. Then he... he finished per-say and got off of me. I was still screaming and crying. He put his clothes on but left mine off. He said we would have to do that again sometime and he walked off. He left me on my bed naked and crying. I had to wait for the spell to wear off before I could do anything. Finally it did after an hour. My legs were weak and I was moving slow for some reason. I got dressed and then I did the only thing I could think of. I walked over to your house," she finally stopped and just sat there, crying as hard as ever on his shoulder.

He was crying himself, "Please tell me that is it."

He felt her nod and held her closer. There was a mixture of rage and pain in his heart. He wanted to sit there holding Hermione until she stopped crying, but he also wanted to go to the common room and wait for Ron so he could kill him. He knew he wouldn't really be able to kill him but God how he wanted to at that moment.

He felt her start to shake and he held her closer, "He won't ever come near you again!"

She sobbed and kissed his shoulder, "Thank you."

"I think it's time we went to bed," he said in a shaky breath.

"No. I don't want to go to bed. I want to stay up with you. I want to be able to stop crying before I do," she breathed back.

He slowly let go of her, "Come on. Let's go sit on the couch. It'll be a lot more comfortable over there."

He stood up and helped her get to her feet. Both of their eyes were bloodshot. Harry wiped his face down and got her to walk over to the

couch. They sat down and she placed her head back on his shoulder. She continued to cry.

There was a distant rumble above them and they knew supper was finally over. Hermione clung to him and stared up at the ceiling.

“It’s all right. I’ve got you and no one will touch you. I won’t let them. You know I won’t,” he stopped crying when he saw how scared she was.

He held onto her closely as the rumble of people talking and running to their dormitories continued. Even after it was all over they continued to sit like that. Their attentions had turned to focus on the staircase, praying that no one would find them down there.

Harry felt his eyes start to grow heavy. He looked at Hermione and could tell she wasn’t going to fall asleep as easily as he was. He gave her a light kiss on the side of her head and rested his own on the back of the couch.

He could feel her rest her head back on his shoulder as he started to fall asleep.

She looked up at him and saw his eyes shut. She started to feel a bit more afraid that someone would find them down there. Then she realized how closely he was holding her and that he would wake up if anyone tried to take her from him. The thought relaxed her and she allowed herself to fall asleep as well.

What Harry had feared would happen happened. He had a dream of everything that she had told him. He could almost see a clear picture of what they might have looked like. He tried to scream at Ron to get off her but he couldn’t even hear himself. Her screams were filling his ears.

He suddenly woke up with a start. He looked around and saw Hermione snoring in his arms. She looked at peace. This comforted him. He kissed her forehead and started to go back to sleep.

A/N: I spent an hour deciding wether or not to actually put what happened to her down. I eventually decided to because I didn't like being the only one knowing what had happened. Please let me know what you thought of the whole thing!

## Chapter 10:

### A Restless Spirit

Harry and Hermione woke to a sudden sound of feet above them and voices carrying down the stairs. His arms were still around her shoulders and hers were around his chest.

She slowly pushed herself up and rubbed her eyes, "What time is it?"

He grunted and looked at his watch, "Uh, just before eight. Want to head down to breakfast?"

"Not really," she murmured.

He pushed his back off the couch and placed his hand on hers, "We have to though. Dumbledore said so. We don't have to sit with anybody if you don't want to."

"That's pretty much impossible," she rested back on the couch and closed her eyes.

"Come on," he stood up and pulled her with him.

She let him pull her up but didn't let herself stay up. He pulled harder on her arm and she fell into him. He caught her and held her steady.

"Hermione, come on. I know you want to go back to sleep but we have to go to breakfast," he laughed, hugging her when she didn't move.

She shook her head, "I just want to stay here."

Her arms wrapped around him as she started to get comfortable, "Hermione!"

"Can we wait until we think everyone's out of the common room so no one will see us leave here?" she whispered.

“Fine,” he laughed.

He kissed the top of her head and walked away. She wobbled a little and looked at him for a second.

“What are you doing?” she asked groggily.

“Getting my books. You should do the same,” he said as he opened to door to his new room.

“Good point,” she laughed.

She went into her own room and walked over to her trunk. She started to dig through it until she found her bag. Then she grabbed all her books and shoved them into her back. She walked back out and found Harry stretching outside his door.

He looked at her and laughed. He walked over to her and ran his hand over her hair. She pulled out a small mirror and looked at herself. She jumped and started running her fingers through her hair. He laughed at her again.

“It didn’t look that bad, Hermione,” he grabbed her hand after she put her mirror away.

“To you maybe,” she let him pull her to the stairs.

He started to walk up them then changed his mind, “Hold on.”

“What?” she asked.

He leaned over and kissed her softly, “OK. We can go now.”

She laughed at him and followed him up the stairs. She waited as he peeked out the tapestry and then he pulled her out. They left the common room and headed down to the Great Hall for breakfast.

When they got near enough to hear all the voices Hermione stopped. He turned to look at her and saw she was scared again.

“I won’t let any of them touch you,” he whispered in her ear as he hugged her.

“I know,” she nodded into him.

She let go of his hand and started walking back towards the Great Hall. She was almost about to turn in when she stopped and tried to head in the opposite direction. Harry grabbed her arms and forced her to turn around. He practically pushed her into the Great Hall.

“It’ll be fine. Just go. Try and look normal so no one will ask you what’s wrong,” he whispered so she would be the only one to hear him.

She nodded and took in a deep breath. She walked in with Harry right behind her and found an area that was somewhat alone. She sat down and took a quick look around. Harry sat down next to her and shook his head with a laugh. No one was paying any attention to them.

Then Neville walked over to them and sat down in front of them. He gave them a quick smile and started getting himself breakfast. Hermione was staring at him, trying to keep her fear hidden. Harry nudged her and turned to look at Neville.

“Seamus and Dean kept wondering where you were last night. I told them to leave you alone and not ask because I know something horrible has happened. And I can tell that you don’t want anyone finding out. I’ll keep anyone from bothering you about it whatever it is,” he whispered to them, not looking up at his food as though he hadn’t said anything.

“Thanks,” he whispered back, getting the hint. “So how was your summer, Neville.”

“It could have been better. How ‘bout yours?” he said through a mouth full of food.



“Same,” he grunted.

“Dare I ask how yours was, Hermione?” he glanced at her quick enough to see her shake her head. “So, will I ever find out what’s going on?”

Harry looked at Hermione and tried to read her answer, “Eventually.”

Neville stopped eating and looked up at them. He looked from Harry to Hermione and back. He shrugged and started eating again.

“I’ll let you know when I’m ready for you to know,” she finally whispered.

He nodded at her to let her know he heard her. He looked over at Harry and saw his hand on hers. He was rubbing it softly and she seemed to be calming down. He shook his head of what he just saw and finished his food.

Professor McGonagall walked over to them and placed their schedules in front of them. She placed a hand on Hermione’s shoulder before walking away. Neville looked at her then Harry.

“She knows what happened,” he whispered through his schedule.

He grabbed Hermione’s and looked over both of them. He pushed them both in front of her and smiled. Somehow they had every class together. Arithmacy had been taken off of her list and Divinations had been removed from his. He saw her smile a little when she looked at them. As much as he knew she loved Arithmacy, he knew she would rather stay with him. He could tell she loved him more.

“We should probably head to our first class,” Harry said to her. “And of course it has to be Potions.”

She stood up after he did and looked around nervously. Her hand was itching to grab Harry’s, but she had to act normal. She didn’t want people coming up to her to ask what was wrong. She didn’t want people coming up to her at all.

She followed him out of the Great Hall and grabbed his hand as soon as she knew no one could see them. He rubbed the top of her hand with his thumb and placed a quick kiss on the side of her head.

“It’s all right,” he whispered.

She nodded and looked behind them to make sure they hadn’t been seen. They walked down to the dungeons as quickly as they could. To her relief, nobody was down there yet. They stopped outside the classroom door and Harry pulled her towards him.

“I don’t want to be here, Harry,” she started to sob as he hugged her.

“I know you don’t. I’ll make sure you’re safe. You know that,” he could feel her crying on his chest. “It’s all right, Hermione. It’ll be fine. Shh.”

They stood there for a few minutes. He allowed her to cry for a little bit, but tried to get her to stop when he heard the distant rumble of people leaving the Great Hall.

He helped her wipe her face dry just as he heard the first voices of their classmates. Neville was the first to come down. He stood next to Hermione and gave them a small smile.

As others started to pour down the stairs, Harry pulled Hermione into the classroom and picked a table near the back. He gestured Neville to join them and he sat on the other side of Hermione.

“You sure you want me to sit here,” he asked nervously.

“Yeah. Nobody else knows there is something wrong and I don’t want anyone guessing that there might be something wrong. So yes. I want you to sit there,” Harry whispered to him.

“What about Ron?”

Hermione’s eyes shot open and she stared at Neville, “No!”

He jumped a little and nodded his head. He sat down and leaned across the table towards Harry so they would be the only ones to hear him.

“Did Ron do something?”

Harry looked at Hermione and nodded, “Do you want me to tell him?”

She nodded and leaned up against him. She was trying so hard not to cry.

He wrapped his arm around her and lowered his voice, “Ron went over to her house over the summer and,” he swallowed and glanced at Hermione. She had her eyes closed. He leaned over her and put his mouth next to Neville’s hear.

“He what?” he jumped and sat back in his chair.

Harry sat back down in his chair and nodded his head, “But please don’t tell anyone.”

“Trust me, I won’t,” he breathed. “I’m so sorry, Hermione. I’m going to sit with you guys in every class. That way he can’t get near you.”

She patted his hand, “Thank you, Neville.”

Everyone started to seat themselves around them. Harry looked around to make sure Ron was far away from her. He spotted him near the front with Dean and Seamus. He felt himself start to glare at him. He quickly looked away and towards Hermione. She too had been looking at Ron only with fear on her face.

“It’s OK,” he whispered to her.

Her stare pulled away from Ron and fell on Harry. She smiled slightly and started to feel better. He won’t let anything happen to me. I’ll be fine.

“All right everyone. Settle down,” a squat man said, walking to the front of the classroom.

“Who’s that?” Harry asked Neville.

“That’s Slughorn,” he whispered. “He’s the new Potions teacher.”

“That happened to Snape?” he wasn’t upset about, just confused.

“He’s now the Dark Arts teacher. Figures, huh?”

Harry turned back to the man at the front. This is going to be interesting, he thought, looking over at Malfoy.

And it was. Slughorn showed no interest in showing the Slytherins favoritism. This made Harry want to laugh.

Hermione was starting to act like herself again when he started asking the class questions. Her hand would shoot up straight away. At first she wasn’t as persistent to answer them, but after a while she would be the first with her hand in the air, like usual.

But her other hand was secretly holding onto Harry’s under the table. Her grip loosened as she started to answer questions. But then the class ended and she had a death grip on him again.

They waited for everyone else to leave the class before they did. As they reached the door Slughorn stopped them.

“Ah. Harry Potter! I’ve been looking forward to meeting you,” he said with a huge grin on his face.

“It’s nice to meet you, too, Sir. I’m sorry, but I don’t want to be late for my next class,” he gave him a fake smile and started to inch his way through the door, still holding onto Hermione’s hand.

“Oh. Don’t let me make you late. Go right ahead. Miss Granger,” he continued to smile.

She just smiled to acknowledge him and followed Harry out the door. They headed to McGonagall's class. They had to inch their way into the classroom. Nobody seemed to be ready to go in yet.

He pulled her to the back of the room and got her to sit in the back corner. She looked scared again. He sat down next to her and rubbed her arm.

"It's fine. Please try to relax," he smiled.

She just gave him a weak smile and stared at the door. She jumped a little when someone walked in but settled a little when she noticed it was only Neville. Harry nodded to the seat in front of her and he sat down.

Others started to pile in and her hand tightened around his. He gave hers a quick squeeze and she let go.

"Sorry," she whispered.

"It's fine. Just calm down a little bit," he whispered back.

Professor McGonagall walked in holding Ron's arm. She forced him into the seat in the front corner farthest away from Hermione. He looked around angrily and slouched down.

"Quiet down now!" she ordered. "Everyone will copy down what is on the board while I finish having a word with Mr. Weasley."

Those around them started pulling out their quills and parchment as she grabbed Ron's arm again and pulled him out of the class. Harry looked at Hermione and saw she too already had her stuff out. He quickly got his out and started to copy down what they had to.

As soon as the door had shut, people start to whisper to one another. Harry knew they were talking about what he might have done. He felt his temper start to rise and his writing was quick.

Surprisingly, he finished before Hermione had. When she did he grabbed her hand and rubbed it under the table.

She smiled at him but he could see her fear in her eyes. He leaned over slightly and whispered as quietly as he could.

“They won’t touch you.”

He watched most of her fear leave her, but knew there was still some in her somewhere.

Professor McGonagall walked back in, shoved Ron back in his seat, and stood next to her desk. She placed her hand on it and watched everyone started hurrying to write down their notes. Harry could have sworn she glanced at them in the back, but wasn’t certain.

During the whole class he saw her glaring at Ron. Almost as though threatening him to do or say anything.

Harry held tight to Hermione’s hand to make sure she was OK. He forced himself to write with his left hand so that he could.

Finally the bell rang. They waited again for everyone to leave first, but yet again were stopped by the teacher.

Professor McGonagall talk with Hermione through most of lunch giving them very little time to eat when they made it to the Great Hall. They didn’t really mind. They weren’t as hungry as they were expecting to be.

And so the rest of the day went by the same way. Flitwick made Ron sit as far away from Hermione as possible and other classes also had that same space. Has they had asked, none of the other teachers knew.

Hermione had gotten Harry to skip supper and go straight to their secret common room below the original. They did their homework in silence. To his great surprise he finished all of his homework that night. That was a first.

They finished at the same time. She gave him a weird look after she checked over his.

“What?” he asked confused.

“This is all right!” she said, shocked. “Since when do you get everything right?”

“I guess since I don’t have that much to distract me. I have you on my mind all the time now and when I feel you’re not holding onto my hand as tightly I know you’re fine and I can, well, concentrate I guess,” he laughed.

She started to blush, “Well, I’m glad you now have a way to concentrate.”

He smiled at her but then heard others footsteps above them. Her face shot to the ceiling and she started to tense up.

“Come on,” he grabbed her hand and walked over to the couch.

He pulled her down next to him. She leaned into his chest and sighed. His arms wrapped around her and held her to him.

“I feel so safe with you, Harry,” she whispered absentmindedly.

“I’m glad you do,” he whispered back.

She lifted herself off of his chest and looked into his eyes. She felt hers slowly start to shut as her head moved closer to his.

Their lips touched, then parted. Her arms moved around his neck to keep him where he was.

## Chapter 11:

### New Desires

A month passed and everyday went by the same. She would start a mess in the morning, but when they were alone at night she wouldn't let him leave her side at all. He didn't mind at all.

Harry was managing to pass every one of his classes. He was shocked, but he did find it easy to concentrate without Ron as a friend. He also found that he liked spending all of his time with Hermione instead.

Professor McGonagall had told him at one time that he was the Quidditch captain. He found himself turning her down. He never wanted to leave Hermione alone. When he told her this she was furious.

"Why would you quit playing Quidditch!" she yelled.

"Because I never want to make you stay down here by yourself. I want to always here if and when you start crying!" he was smiling at her, but she didn't understand why.

"Harry. You love playing Quidditch. I don't want you to stop just because of me," she had turned away from him.

He wrapped his arms around her from behind, "But I love you more."

And he knew it was true. She was all he could think of anymore. Not just because of what had happened to her, but because he really did love her. He really didn't want to be away from her.

They hadn't once slept in their rooms. They always fell asleep on the couch in front of the fire. He was getting to the point where he wouldn't be able to fall asleep without her. He would have to have her in his arms before he even felt tired.



Hermione knew she was getting closer to him. Physically closer. But she didn't feel all that scared. She was so comfortable with him she felt there was nothing to be afraid of at all. She was getting to where her legs would be over his lap as they talked in front of the fire.

She was transitioning slowly, but still quick in her opinion. Harry didn't seem to mind at all. His hand would be down near her ankles and the other would be holding hers. He would make sure he would not touch her in anyway that may scare her. But in the back of her mind she almost wished he would.

She was almost afraid to talk to him about it though. She knew he would start getting all concerned with her, but she didn't want him, too. She wanted him to keep acting the way he was.

He started holding her hand in the hall. One, so she would not get pushed away from him and two, just because he wanted to.

They started kissing more frequently. Harry was a little nervous about doing so at first but after a while of her kissing him more often he got over it. Until one day, late in October, he got a whole new kind of thought.

He immediately shook the thought from his head, but knew it was not going to leave him alone. He would dwell on it in class when there was nothing to do. He didn't want to think about it, but Hermione was right there.

No! he would think to himself. No! She's already gone through a lot. I can't be thinking about that. I just can't.

He would glance over at her when he saw her staring out the window. God, how she was beautiful. He had turned to look back at the front of the classroom and tried to think of something else. Then he noticed Ron and felt anger run through his blood.

He's ruined my chances. I hate him! No! Don't think about that sort of thing! I still hate him though.

His hate for Ron never died down. It would only grow when he saw him. One night he had gone into the common room when he heard footsteps and found Ron sitting at the base of the stairs leading to the boys' dormitory.

"Harry!" he stood up when he saw him. "Listen, I want to talk with you."

Harry walked over to him and grabbed the front of his shirt, "I don't want to talk to you."

He punched Ron across the face and threw him onto the stairs. He wanted to yell at him, but knew he would wake everyone else if he did. He didn't want an audience for this.

"Harry, please! I don't know why I did what I did! I'm tell you the truth!" Ron said through a bleeding lip.

"Yeah. Right. You better hope I never catch you alone again, because if I do. There's going to be Hell to pay!"

He watched him run up the stairs, feeling himself start to calm down. He walked back over to the tapestry and down the stairs. He heard Hermione jump and slowed down a bit.

"It's only me. No one's coming for you," he said as calmly as he could.

"I woke up and you were gone. You didn't leave a note this time. I was starting to get scared," she whimpered as she threw herself into his arms.

"I didn't think I had time to leave a note. I'm sorry. It's just I heard movement above us and I felt I needed to check it out," he brushed her hair out of her face.

"Oh. What was it?"

He swallowed and looked away from her, "It was... Ron. He wanted to talk to me, but I only wanted to hurt him. He ran back up to his dorm after I hit him. You're safe."

He felt her tremble when he said his name, but then stopped when he held her tighter, "Please don't let him touch me again."

"You know I won't," he whispered in her ear.

She looked up at him and kissed him on the cheek. Then slowly kissed his lips. He pulled her as close to him as he possible could as he kissed her back.

She allowed him to explore her mouth, but pulled away when she felt his hands start to slide down her back. Maybe she wasn't ready to have him touch her yet.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

"No. It's fine. Just a little soon," she said with a shaky breath.

They walked back over to the couch, "Would you rather sleep in your bed tonight?"

Hers eyes grew a little and she turned to look at him.

"I meant by yourself. I'd be sleeping in my own bed of course," he quickly added when seeing the look in her eyes.

"Oh," she let out a small sigh, "No. I'm fine here."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I'm sure," she smiled.

Dammit! he thought. He didn't want anymore of those thoughts to come over him. Especially when she was asleep in his arms. But what could he do? He was a teenage boy after all.

## Chapter 12:

### Hogsmeade

Yes! The first Hogsmeade trip was on its way and Harry was praying that she would want to go. He didn't want to be completely alone with her and his thoughts. He was starting to not trust himself.

"Hermione?" he asked nervously while they were doing their homework one evening.

"Yes?" she looked up at him for a brief second.

"Are we going to go to Hogsmeade this weekend?"

She stopped writing to look directly at him, "Why?"

"It's just..." he stopped. "Do you want to go?"

"I don't really mind. Do you want to?" she returned to her work.

"Yeah. I thought it would be nice to get out. I know you're still uncomfortable with being out in the open but..."

"We can go," she interrupted him.

He felt his soul relax, "All right. I want to buy you something while we're there if you don't mind."

"Why would you want to do that?" she laughed slightly, dipping her quill in her ink.

"Because I can," he smiled. "I feel I should, too."

"What?" she started to laugh a little more.

“Well. I love you and I want to buy you something,” he spoke softly as though embarrassed.

At this she started laugh out loud. She stopped writing and held her hand over her mouth.

“What?” he glared at her jokingly.

She shook her head, “You don’t have to buy me anything just because you love me.”

“But I want to.”

She stopped laughing but he could still see it in her eyes. She was still smiling as she leaned over and kissed him. She picked her quill back up and finished her essay for Snape.

“So does that mean I can buy you something?” he asked, picking up his own quill.

“If you really want to,” she smiled.

“Great!”

He finished up his homework and turned in his chair to stare at her. He watched her blush and try to hide it from him. After a while she smacked him on the arm.

“Owe! Why’d you do that!” he was confused.

“Because you’re distraction me,” her face was now the shade of red on her tie.

“Well, you distract me. I never hit you for just sitting next to me,” he argued.

“I don’t stare right at you and be so obvious about it. But you do,” she was grinning very broadly now.

“So?” he laughed.

“So, stop it. Let me finish my homework in peace,” she laughed back.

“Of course homework comes before me,” he joked.

Suddenly she turned to him and kissed him hard, “Never.”

This time he felt himself turn red. He slid in his chair to face away from her and felt himself grin bigger than she had been. He heard her laugh.

“What is it this time?” he turned back to her.

“Still you,” she laughed.

“Why?”

“You’re turning red. I find that very sweet...,” she smiled, “And funny.”

“Thanks,” he laughed. “That makes me feel real good.”

He stood up and walked over to the couch. He plopped down and tried very hard not to laugh. He knew she knew he was joking, but he still wanted to be a little bit believable.

He heard her set down her quill then saw her walk around the couch. She sat down in his lap and put her arms around his neck. She had become very comfortable with him by now.

“It was more cute and sweet than it was funny,” she said softly.

He smiled and kissed her, “That’s good to know.”

She leaned her head against his for a second then stood up. She walked back over to the table to finish her work. He watched her over

the back of the couch. She may have been upside-down to him, but she still looked beautiful.

He tried to shake the sudden thoughts that consumed him from his head. He wanted her. He couldn't help himself. He just wanted her.

He saw her finish her homework and walk up to him. She gave him an upside down kiss and walked back around the couch to sit next to him. His head followed her the entire way.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked, staring at him.

His facial features jumped and he looked away nervously, "Something I shouldn't be thinking about."

She continued to stare at him for a while then finally spoke, "Something with me or another girl?"

"What? You. Why would I be thinking about another girl?" he asked shocked.

"Well, I just didn't know because of what happened to me and I knew you wouldn't want to think about that," she whispered.

"That's why I'm trying hard not to think about it," he whispered back. He looked at her for a second, "How do you know what it is that I'm thinking about exactly?"

"I don't know. Somehow I just do. Like how you somehow knew what I wanted when we were talking to Dumbledore on the first night back," she was staring straight into his eyes.

They continued to stare at each other for some time. Then Harry slowly leaned towards her and kissed her.

"I love you, Hermione," he said gently.

"I love you, too, Harry."

She rubbed his cheek softly and kissed him again. He wrapped his arms around her and held her to him.

“I’m sorry I’m thinking about that.”

“Don’t be. You’re a boy and that’s what boys do,” she sighed.

“I don’t want to be one of those boys though,” he kissed her cheek.

“But you’re not.”

“Yes, I am. I’m thinking about that.”

“That doesn’t make you one of those boys. You’re sweet and gentle. Most boys aren’t,” she leaned back to smile at him, hiding the tears that were coming to her eyes.

“I’m glad you think so,” he smiled, kissing her again. “And he won’t ever come near you again.”

She smiled weakly at him and hugged him tightly.

His thoughts never left his head as the week went by. He tried to focus on other things but he was having a hard time doing so. He didn’t like being completely alone with Hermione anymore. He didn’t trust himself.

Then finally the weekend came and they headed off to Hogsmeade. They didn’t know what the weather would be like sitting down in their little hidden room. They didn’t have any windows to stare out of. Only each other.

They waited till all the other Gryffindors left to leave. They walked down the halls hand in hand looking around to see if anyone was coming. They didn’t feel like being around anybody else that day.

Hermione squeezed his hand a little when they saw the last people walking out the oak, front doors. He squeezed back to show he wouldn’t let go and heard her let out a sigh.



Filch watched them closely as they walked past him and outside. He stared at their hands and raised an eyebrow as they walked away.

The sun hit them hard in the eyes when they walked out. Harry's eyes squinted up and looked down towards the ground. He felt Hermione lean against him and groan. It was either him or it was rather warm for late October.

He started to think about what he wanted to buy her, but nothing really came to mind. He just decided he wouldn't let her spend a knut at all. If he couldn't find anything he really wanted to get her he would buy her everything.

He laughed at himself as they walked on. It was such a silly thought, but that's what he was going to do. That's what he wanted to do.

She looked up at him and saw a smile on his face, "What?"

"What, what?" he asked looking at her.

"What's with the smile?" she squinted up at him.

"Oh," he started to laugh, "It was something I thought about."

Her expression turned serious and nervous, "What... what were you thinking about?"

"Not that," he laughed. "Just something I'm going to do for you today."

She relaxed, "And what is that?"

He turned his head to face forward and thought about if he should tell her or not, "Oh nothing."

"Harry, what?" she badgered.

He smiled and looked back at her, "Not let you spend any money today."

She started to laugh, "And why are you going to do that?"

"Because I don't know what I want to buy you yet," he looked away again.

"So you're going to buy me everything I would buy myself?" she giggled.

"That's right," he held his head high, not at all ashamed of it.

She continued to laugh as they walked into Hogsmeade. When she looked around at all the other students she moved even closer to Harry and managed to push him into the nearest bookstore, Of course, he thought.

He watched her look at several books and put them back, "Pick out any you want. I'll buy all of them for you if you want."

He heard her laugh and pull a book she was putting on a shelf back towards her, "You realize I love books right?"

"Yeah," he smiled, pulling a book she had especially been looking at off the shelf.

He grinned at her and grabbed the book she was holding out of her hands. He placed it on top of the other and waved his hand at the others.

He leaned down to her ear and whispered, "Any."

They walked out of the store with a bag full of books in Harry's hand. His other was holding onto Hermione's tightly. She had had her hand over her mouth to muffle her laughter when he bought the books.

He looked around at all the shops, looking for one that would hold an item that he would love to buy her. Nothing looked right. Finally a store jumped out at him. He looked at Hermione and smiled.

He pulled her over to the store and watched her turn red. He laugh and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. He heard her giggle as they entered the shop. To his great relief there was no one in the shop except the owner. She smiled at them as they looked around.

They left the shop with a ring on one of Hermione's fingers. She was redder than ever and there was a huge grin on her face. She couldn't look at Harry without laughing and turning redder.

"Why don't we go back up to Hogwarts? I'm done. I got you what I wanted to and you got several books. I think we're done," he smiled, leaning down to give her a small kiss on the cheek.

He saw her blush even harder and nod. She looked away from him and stared at her new ring. A simple ring, but it meant so much to her.

She ran her thumb over the top. Simple gold colored, with three small hearts carved into the top, overlapping each other. That's all it needed.

They sat down on the couch and Harry wrapped his arms around her, "You know I love you, right?"

Hermione was still smiling as she nodded. She rested her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes. She let off a soft sigh and snuggled up closer to him.

He smiled and kissed the side of her head, "As long as you know."

Her arm wrapped around his chest. He looked down and watched her start to fall asleep. He rested his head against hers and felt himself start to drift off. There were no thoughts in his head except for how much he cared for her.

## Chapter 13:

### Bothersome People

During class Harry would see Hermione playing with her ring. He would laugh to himself and give her a little smile. She always blushed and got back to her work.

Neville would notice at times, but never let on that he had. He knew there was something more going on. He just didn't want to bother with asking what it was.

But he wasn't the only one that noticed. Others had too, but they weren't as courteous as Neville. Thankfully Harry knew what people wanted when they would start to walk up to them. He would grab Hermione's arm and pull her away from them as quickly as he could.

But one day Harry had to go to Professor Dumbledore's office by himself. On his way Malfoy ran into him and stopped him from going any farther.

"What the hell do you want Malfoy?" he snapped, trying to find a way around him.

"So Potter's got himself a little girlfriend, huh?" he smirked.

"What are you talking about?" he glared at him.

"You and the filthy Mudblood."

Suddenly Malfoy was up against the wall with Harry's arm over his throat and his wand pointing at his face, "Don't you ever call her that again. I swear if you do I will kill you."

Malfoy was sputtering and scratching at Harry's arm to try and pry him off. He pushed harder into him and never looked away. Then there were footsteps coming down the hall. He released him and shoved his wand back into his pocket.

Malfoy slid down the wall trying to get air to his lungs. Harry looked around for a second then walked off to Dumbledore's office. He turned the corner out of sight just as Filch turned into the corridor.

"What happened here?" he heard him wheeze out.

When he heard no reply he continued to Dumbledore's office. His fists were clenched as he walked down the hall. Hate coursed through his body and rage through his blood. He turned another corner and ran head on into Dumbledore.

"Careful, Harry. I was coming to see what was taking you so long," he smiled down at him.

"Sorry, Professor. I got caught up by someone," he tried to relax himself.

"That's all right. Come I need to talk to you about Miss Granger," he lowered his voice to where only Harry could hear him.

They walked into his office and sat down on either side of his desk, "Why do you need to talk to me about her?"

He saw that his eyes were soft and he was not in trouble for anything, "I'm just wondering how she's doing. She does seem to be happier."

"She's doing much better. She still gets nervous around others and going outside, but I've got a close eye on her," he smiled slightly.

"That's good to hear. I'm glad she's doing better. But I have heard things around the school," his features turned serious.

"Like what?"

"That you two are closer than you are letting on. As though you have a relationship?" he eyed him closely.

Harry felt his hairline start to sweat. He swallowed, not sure as to what to say. Yes, there was a relationship, but they weren't doing anything wrong. How was he going to convince Dumbledore of this?

Suddenly Dumbledore started laughing, "Harry, I know you and Hermione aren't doing anything wrong."

Huh? "How...?" he started.

"I do believe I know you better than that, Harry," he laughed. "But please tell me. Are you two dating as you say?"

Harry went red and nodded.

"I must say I'm a little confused. I do know you and Hermione have always been close, but after what happened?" his brow furrowed.

"I know. It does seem very odd, Professor, but I do care for her deeply. I like keeping her safe and taking care of her. And apparently I make her feel very safe. She told me she was confused about how comfortable she was with me. I understood of course, but I like being with her. There's nothing else about it," he confessed.

"Harry, I feel as though this... rape," he closed his eyes when he said the word, "Is the reason you two have become so close though."

He felt his heart sink, "I never thought about that before."

"As bad as the situation that has happened is. I don't think it is a bad thing for you two. She does seem much happier. And if you can cheer her up after that then I say, go for it," he smiled.

Harry smiled and nodded, "All right."

"You may go back to class now."

He walked down the hall with a sinking feeling in his stomach, 'I feel as though this... rape is the reason you two have become so close.'

The words played over and over again in his head. He didn't like them. Not at all.

"No. No, you really do love Hermione. There's no doubt about it, Potter," he said under his breath to himself. "Don't give credit to what that idiot did. It was her that made you fall in love with her... What!"

He stopped dead in his tracks. Did he really just say that? He wasn't in love with her. At least not yet. No. Not yet. I think. Oh boy.

"Harry?" his head snapped around to find Ginny walking out from behind a tapestry.

"Ginny? What were you doing back there?" he raised an eyebrow at her.

Her hands were flattening her hair, "What? Oh, nothing. Oh but I have been wondering. What did Ron do to make you hate him?"

He opened his mouth to answer but then saw the tapestry move. His brow furrowed and he looked around Ginny at it. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw Ginny start to go red.

He walked passed her, but she grabbed his arm. He broke free of her grip and pulled back the tapestry. There was standing Malfoy looking extremely red himself. His hair, which was usually slicked back, was now a mess.

"What the bloody hell? Ron's going to be pissed. Maybe you should tell him," he said, feeling rage surge through his blood again as he popped into his head.

He started walking down the hall again with his fists clenched. Ginny ran up to him and grabbed his arm.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

"Not at you. At your brother," he said through gritted teeth.

“What’d he do? My mum wouldn’t tell me. Hermione is never away from you so I can never ask her. What did he do?”

“Like I’m going to tell you in front of him,” he snarled towards Malfoy.

He pulled his arm away from Ginny and headed back to class. He didn’t hear them say anything to each other or them walking after him. Finally he was sitting next to Hermione again.

He felt better. He had her in his sight and he knew he did truly love her. He smiled and started to pack his stuff up as others did. She leaned over a little as she put her things away.

“What did he want?” she whispered.

“He was wondering how you were doing,” he whispered back. “And he heard rumors that we were dating going around the school. He just found that idea a little odd.”

“It is a little odd, but I don’t care. I love you and that’s all that matters,” she smiled.

“Good,” he laughed.

As they always did, they waited for everyone to leave before they did. But just as they were heading for the door, Lavender and Parvati walked back in with their arms crossed. They stood in the doorway to keep them from leaving.

They looked down at Harry and Hermione’s hands linked together then Lavender spoke, “So, where have you been at night?”

Hermione glared at her but didn’t answer.

Then Parvati spoke, “And what’s with you two lately?”

This time Harry glared too. He didn’t care if he harmed them, he forced his way between them and pulled Hermione through too. They



walked down the hall as fast as they could and headed to the Gryffindor common room instead of lunch.

He looked at Hermione and saw tears in her eyes, "What's the matter?"

"I was hoping no one would bother me about any of this," she breathed.

"I was, too. I'm sorry they did," he pulled her to him and hugged her tightly.

"I really don't want to be bothered," she wrapped her arms around him and nestled into his chest.

"I'll try and keep anyone from getting near you," he said into her hair. She smelled good.

They heard footsteps outside the Fat Lady's portrait. They made their way down to their room as quietly as they could. Just as they got behind the tapestry they heard Lavender and Parvati's voices.

Hermione sat down on the couch and hid her face in her hands and she started to cry. Harry ran over to her and pulled her into him. He rocked her back and forth rubbing her back. He kissed her head softly.

"How long until Christmas vacation?" she whimpered from his chest.

"Still about a month. Why?" he said softly.

"Because that's how long I have to wait for everyone to leave and no one will be bothering me," she said in a shaky voice.

He felt her breathing against him. She wasn't crying anymore. He looked down at her and saw her playing with her ring again. He started to laugh at her and she turned red.

"Do you like it?" he smiled.

She smiled back and nodded. She kissed him on the cheek and then the lips.

“Thank you,” she blushed darker.

He kissed her lightly and laughed, “You’re very welcome!”

She leaned back against him and hid her face from him. She was very red and didn’t want him to see. She felt him start to laugh and looked up at him.

“Don’t laugh at me,” she giggled.

“You laugh at me,” he threw back.

“Well...” she started then hid her face again. “Just don’t laugh at me.”

“All right. I won’t. I promise,” he kissed her head again and rested against the couch.

“What class do we have next?” her muffled voice said.

“We don’t have one next. We don’t have any for the rest of the day. We have it off,” he sighed, closing his eyes, feeling very comfortable.

“Good,” she moved closer to him and shut her own eyes, “That means we can just stay down here the rest of the day.”

“Mm,” was all he managed to get out as he drifted off into sleep.

He woke suddenly when Hermione started shaking him, “What? What’s going on?”

He looked around fervently and saw tears in her eyes, “I heard a noise above us.”

“It was probably just another Gryffindor,” he groaned and closed his eyes again.

She shook him again, “No, it wasn’t. It was him. I just know it.”

“Hermione. It’s not him. I’m pretty damn sure it’s not.”

He tried to lean back down, but she grabbed the collar of his robes and pulled him to her. She stared him down and he groaned again.

“Fine. I’ll go see what it was.”

He stood up, prying her hands off his robes, and headed for the stairs. He stopped and turned to look at her.

“Are you sure it’s not just someone going to supper?” he wanted to go back to sleep.

“Yes. It’s one o’clock. Supper is well over. Go look,” the tears threatened to fall.

“Is it really that late?”

“Yeah. Go! Please,” she whimpered, staring at him over the back of the couch.

He saw her cowering behind the couch and headed up the stairs as fast as he could. He didn’t want her scared anymore.

He peeked out from behind the tapestry and saw the Fat Lady’s portrait shut. His brow furrowed and he walked back down the stairs.

“What was it?” Hermione asked, sitting up a little.

He held up a finger and walked into his room. He started digging through his trunk and finally found his invisibility cloak. He stood up straight and turned to head back out the door. There in the doorway was Hermione.

“What’s going on?” she had obvious fear in her voice.

He took in a shaky breath and stared at her, “Come on.”

He walked passed her and grabbed her arm. He pulled her towards the stairs, but she pulled back when they got to the base.

“Why?” was all she asked.

“Because I don’t want to leave you down here while I go see who just snuck out of the common room,” he whispered gently.

She looked at him nervously, her brow furrowed. He grabbed her hand and kissed it lightly.

“I’ll keep you safe. You know that,” he smiled softly.

She walked up close to him and allowed him to throw the cloak over both of them. They walked up the stairs cautiously and out the portrait hole.

They looked around but didn’t see anything. Then they heard something bang into a nearby wall.

“The Room of Requirements,” he whispered.

“What?” she asked in a hushed voice.

“Shh.”

He pointed down the hall and she nodded. They headed towards the Room of Requirements. Suddenly a door appeared and flew open. Out fell Malfoy and Ginny.

Harry threw the cloak off of him after placing Hermione’s hand on his arm so he would know where she was, “What the bloody hell?”

They both looked up at him and jumped ten feet in the air. They quickly moved away from each other and turned a deep shade of red.

“What the hell?” he repeated.

Malfoy ran off leaving him with a very embarrassed looking Ginny. She looked away from Harry and got up. She straightened up her hair and started to walk away.

He grabbed her arm, “Hold up now. What the hell are you doing with Malfoy?”

She gave him an innocent smile and tried to walk away. He tightened his grip and kept her where she was. He felt Hermione’s grip tighten on his arm and he shot her a look telling her not to worry.

“Answer my question,” he ordered.

“It’s none of your business,” she mumbled.

“All right. Fair enough. If you won’t tell me do me a favor then,” he glanced at Hermione again.

“What?” she sighed.

“Don’t ask about what your brother did, where Hermione is at night, or what is going on with me and her,” he started to let go but then stopped, “Oh. And tell Lavender and Parvati to not worry about it.”

“Fine. I’ll do that. But why can’t I know.”

“I said don’t ask,” he gripped her arm tighter.

“Owe! All right. I won’t ask,” she yanked her arm away from him and walked away.

He pulled his arm that Hermione was holding onto, forcing her to come closer, “Open the cloak.”

She did as she was told but kissed him as he closed it.

“What was that for?” he asked with a smile.

“For what you said to Ginny,” she breathed out.

He grinned at her and kissed her again, “I told you I would keep people away from you.”

“Yes, you did. Thank you,” she smiled back.

“You’re welcome,” he started to pull her back to their secret room.

She stopped him for a second to kiss him again. Then she let him take her back down to their room.

They sat back down on the couch and fell back to sleep with the invisibility cloak as their blanket.

Harry woke again only this time to a small scream from Hermione, “What? What this time?” He looked around and saw her laughing, “What the hell happened, Hermione?”

She turned a little pink and removed her hand from her mouth, “I looked down and I couldn’t see my body. I didn’t know what had happened.”

Harry too looked down and saw the bottom half of his body gone. He too started laughing.

“Hermione.”

“I forgot about the invisibility cloak,” she continued to laugh.

He kissed her cheek and continued to laugh also, “What time is it?”

“Time for class,” she gasped between laughs, looking at her watch.

“Great,” he chuckled.

## Chapter 14:

### Slughorn

“God, I thought this class would never end,” Hermione whispered to Neville and Harry as they packed up their ingredients and cauldrons.

Neville laughed, “I know. But it is much better than when Snape taught this class. I actually know what I’m doing for once.”

“That’s true,” Harry nodded. “I still hate this class though.”

“Why? He favors you,” Neville asked, standing up.

“Exactly. It’s pretty obvious why he favors me, too. And that’s why I hate it,” he grunted.

Neville stared at him for a second, “Oh. Yeah. That must suck.”

He shrugged and walked off to their next class. Harry shrugged himself and turned towards Hermione.

“Only two more weeks,” he sighed.

“Till what?” she asked, completely distracted by the book that had fallen out of her bag.

“Till Christmas vacation,” he laughed.

“Oh, that’s right! Thank God,” she smiled.

He grabbed her hand and headed for the door, “Harry. I would like to have a word with you.”

He turned and saw Slughorn walking toward him and Hermione, “About what?”

“I’m having a Christmas party this Friday. Only students I invite may come. And I would be honored if you came. You can of course bring Miss Granger,” he smiled broadly at them.

“I don’t know, Sir,” he started.

“I won’t take no for an answer,” he continued to smile.

Harry went quiet and glanced at Hermione. He knew she wouldn’t want to go and he didn’t want to go.

“Great! I’ll see you there,” he laughed and walked off to lunch.

Hermione looked at Harry and pulled on his arm so he would look at her. She placed her other hand on his cheek to bring him back to his senses.

“You want to go don’t you?” she asked nervously.

“Are you kidding? Of course not,” he laughed. “I’m not going to do anything that will make me spend anymore time with him and hopefully not less time with you.”

She smiled and kissed him softly, “You’re not allowed to leave my side unless I’m changing or in the bathroom.”

He laughed lightly and kissed her, “I love you.”

She giggled, “I love you, too.”

He let go of her hand and wrapped his arms around her. She smiled and held his face in her hands. She pulled his head down to hers and kissed him deeply.

They didn’t hear the footsteps heading towards them. Ron walked into the room and stopped. He started to back away and hit a table causing it to scrape across the floor.



They jumped apart and turned to see who was there. Hermione screamed and hid behind Harry.

“Get him away from me,” she hissed in his ear.

He nodded but knew she wouldn't let him go. She was holding onto his arms too tightly for him to go anywhere. He started glaring at Ron.

Ron saw the rage on Harry's face and ran over to his desk. He grabbed something that was next to it and ran out as fast as he could.

Hermione relaxed against Harry's back and sighed, “Thank God.”

He turned around, still watching the door to make sure no one else was coming, “It's all right. He's gone. I'll keep you safe.”

He pulled her back to him and hugged her tightly. She was shaking slightly as she held onto him.

“Please don't let him near me,” she whimpered.

“You know I won't,” he whispered gently. “Come on. We don't need to go to lunch. We can go up to the common room if you'd like.”

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“Yeah. I lost my appetite,” his upper lip curled.

She dragged her hand down his arm and fitted it in his, “Come on. I don't want to run into anyone else.”

“All right,” he let her lead him out of dungeons and up to the common room.

She dragged him down to their room and pulled him onto the couch. She rested against him and sighed. He felt her shaking slightly and he started to rub her arm.

“What's wrong?” he asked kindly.

“He made me nervous,” she whispered.

“Well, he’s not here now. Everything’s fine. I’ve got you,” he laid his head gently on top of hers.

She stirred slightly and he sat straight up. She pulled herself up and started kissing him. He jumped a little bit at first but kissed her back after the shock wore off.

They sat there for a few moments, his arms holding her gently. She pulled back and stared into his eyes, drowning in their green depth.

She sighed deeply, “I love you, Harry.”

He pulled her closer, “God, I love you, too.”

“Don’t ever let me go,” she breathed.

He sat there for a second wondering which way she meant. “Never,” he said, deciding on both.

She kissed him again and sighed, “I never want this feeling to end.”

“What feeling?” he asked softly.

“The feeling I get when you hold me,” her eyes closed and she laid against him.

He smiled and kissed the top of her head, “And why not?”

“Because it’s the best feeling in the word,” she sighed again. “I love it. And I love you.”

He felt his heart start to float. He squeezed her lightly and kissed her head again. He felt completely lost in her at that moment. All he wanted to do was hold her for the rest of his life. Never let go for one second.

Her breathing became very relaxed and he knew she was starting to fall asleep. He didn't want to wake her, but he knew they still had one more class left that day. He could feel himself fall asleep.

Oh, it's only Defense Against the Dark Arts. We can miss that class.

He let himself fall asleep with her. Snape could get over it.

[illegible]

For the rest of the week Slughorn would nod at Harry and say, “See you there.” But Harry was not going to go. He didn’t like being Slughorn’s favorite. He didn’t like his reason. It angered him.

Every time he would nod at Harry, Hermione would start laughing. He glared at her the first few times, but got over it. It was Hermione after all.

Then Friday came and he avoided Slughorn best he could. But when he and Hermione were walking back from dinner he ran into him.

“Ah, Harry! I’ll see you tonight,” he smiled.

He reached out for his hand, but Harry would have had to let go of Hermione's to shake it, plus he didn't want to. He slowly lowered his hand and smiled at him.

“I’ll be looking to talk to you there,” he grinned. “Well, see you tonight. Hopefully you too, Miss Granger.”

He nodded to both of them and walked off. Hermione started laughing. He pushed on her lightly and started walking away. She didn't notice. She had closed her eyes and held her hand to her mouth to try and stop laughing.

She felt him tug on her arm and she almost fell from her lack of attention. He quickly caught her and held her to him as she tried to find her footing. She stumbled a little and he held her closer to keep her up.

He felt the warmth from her body and tried to think of something to change the thoughts that came to his mind. She was so close to him, he couldn't stand it.

Hermione looked up at him and saw his eyes closed, "Are you OK?"

He shook his head and let go of her when she stopped moving.

"What's wrong?" she asked, concerned.

"We need to talk about some things," he said, grabbing her hand.

"Like what?"

"Not here," he whispered.

They walked passed a group of people and he could feel their eyes on them. Leave us alone, he thought.

Thankfully they did. He pulled her down the stairs and sat her on the couch.

"What's going on?" she asked him.

"I keep think things I don't want to be thinking," he confessed to her.

"What sort of things?" her brow furrowed.

"Things that might make you nervous," he avoided eye contact with her.

She watched him for a minute, "Oh."

He felt her inch away slightly. He closed his eyes and felt his heart sink. He didn't want to do this to her.

"Please don't get nervous around me," he whispered.

“I won’t,” she was staring straight ahead of her, “I love you, Harry. Nothing could make me nervous around you.”

“Good. I don’t want to make you nervous. That’s the last thing I want to do,” he reached for her hand slowly.

He almost pulled back when she stretched her own out to meet his. He smiled warmly at her and kissed the top of it. He saw her smile, but she still didn’t look anywhere but straight ahead of her. Finally she did look at him.

“I need to tell you something,” she breathed.

“What?” he turned his body towards her.

She took in a deep breath and moved closer to him. She kissed him softly before she spoke, “I have thought about that, too. About doing that with you.”

“Hermione, I don’t want you to think about that sort of thing. I don’t want you to become scared or anything like that,” he squeezed her hand slightly and looked her dead in the eyes.

“But the thing is. It doesn’t bother me as much as I thought it would,” he gave her a quizzical look, “Because it’s you.”

“Hermione,” he whispered.

“No, Harry. Don’t tell me not to think about it. I didn’t tell you to not think about it, please don’t tell me, too,” he opened his mouth to protest but she held a finger to his lips, “Don’t. When I think about you I don’t feel scared. Only when something actually happens to make me think we are getting closer to doing... it.”

He looked at her tenderly and brought his hand up to her face, “You know I would never hurt you though.”

She smiled as he kissed her on the forehead, then the cheek, and then her lips. She laughed slightly and kissed him again.

“I love you, Harry. So much.”

“Good. ‘Cause I love you so much, too,” he smiled. “Hey. Why don’t we start on our homework to get off this subject?”

She nodded. He started to stand up and walk away when she grabbed his arm, “Wait.”

“Yeah?” he looked down at her on the couch.

She stood up and wrapped her arms around his neck, “You have to promise me one thing.”

He slid his arms around her waist and smiled, “I will promise you anything and everything.”

She smiled and kissed him, “Just promise me that if we do get to that stage... that you will be gentle.”

He saw a tear come to her eyes and he wiped it away, “I promise to be gentle. I’m always gentle with you. I’m not going to change that because I don’t want to.”

She smiled and more tears fell down her face. But he knew they were happy tears. She let out a sob that was mixed in with a laugh and fell into his chest. He laughed lightly and hugged her closely.

“God, I love you, Hermione!” he laughed.

“I love you, too!” she sobbed happily into his chest.

He kissed her head and took in a deep breath that was filled with her scent, “I guess homework can wait.”

He felt her nod and laughed. He sat them both down on the couch. She continued to cry. He rocked her back and forth while rubbing her back.

“Why are you crying?” he laughed.

“I don’t know,” she choked out. “I just feel like crying.”

“Then go ahead. I don’t mind. Just wait a minute,” he pushed her off him and stood up.

She wiped her hand across her face but the tears still fell. She watched him go into his room and return with a blanket in his arms. He sat down and pulled her back to him. He wrapped an arm around her and threw the blanket over them. She smiled and continued to cry on his chest.

He held onto her gently and stared into the fire. They both started to fall asleep as the flames’ light danced over them.

Harry woke to a small noise he heard above which was followed by a yell. He looked around and saw he was lying flat on his back with Hermione on top of him. She was sound asleep and holding onto him around his chest. There was a small wet spot next to her eyes, but there was a smile on her face.

He stroked her hair a few times before he fell back asleep. He dreamed a wonderful dream where Hermione had not been through what she had and they were able to be together. He did not feel guilty about it, only wished it could be that way in real life. He did feel guilty about that though.

## Chapter 15:

### Christmas Vacation Arrives

Harry and Hermione went into the common room before anybody else got up so they could say goodbye to Neville. Hermione was in better spirits that day. She was excited that everyone else would be gone and she wouldn't have to worry about anything.

They sat in one of the armchairs by the fire with her in Harry's lap. He held her around the waist and made sure she was sitting on his leg and not directly in his lap. He couldn't have her there.

When they heard the first footsteps she slid off his lap and onto the floor. Her head rested on his knee.

Neville was one of the first ones to come down. They said their goodbyes and waited for a break in people coming into the common room to go back down to their own private one.

Hermione was in such a good mood that she bounced onto the table and just sat there staring at him. He walked up to her and tried to pull her off. Instead she pulled him to her and kissed him. He started laughing and placed his hands on her back. He pulled on her until she was dangerously close to sliding right off.

She laughed and wrapped her arms around him, "I love you."

He laughed as she started giggling, "I love you, too."

He leaned forward to kiss her but she pulled back, still giggling. He gave her a fake glare and pulled her to him as close as he could. He grabbed the back of her neck and covered her lips with his. He felt her laughing beneath him.

"What is with you?" he laughed, pulling away.



“I don’t know,” she giggled. “I guess I’m just excited that everyone is finally leaving. I don’t have to be scared anymore and I get to be with you the entire time!”

She bounced a little as she said this. Harry started cracking up and stepped away from her slightly when she smacked his arm.

“But you’re hyper?” he gasped out.

“I know. It’s weird,” she pulled on his shirt to get him to come closer to her.

She ended up pulling him into another kiss and refused to let him go anywhere. He laughed against her and wrapped his arms tight around her. He forced his head away from hers and saw a gleam in her eyes.

“There is something wrong with you,” he chuckled.

“No there’s not. I’m just happy,” she grinned.

Her eyes were sparkling as she looked at him. He kissed her again and continued to laugh. She grabbed his hands and swung them between them.

“I love you,” she giggled, smiling sheepishly.

“I love you, too,” he breathed out between laughs.

Suddenly she slid off the table. She inched passed him and pulled on his arms. So he would follow her.

“What are you doing?” he asked, nervously.

He thought she was going to pull him over to the couch, but she was heading for one of the bedroom doors. She just grinned at him and opened her door. She pulled him in and shut it behind them.

“Hermione?” he was no longer laughing.



She saw his lips turn up into a small smile. She felt herself grin and closed her eyes. He was never going to hurt her.

[illegible]

Harry woke to someone stirring next to him. He looked around and saw Hermione moving up closer to him in her sleep. He held his arm tighter around her and kissed her temple softly. This girl confused him. But somehow in a good way.

He started thinking about what was going through her mind. Would she be scared of him after what happened? Was she going to act differently around him? Would she hate him, too?

“God, please let the answer be no,” he breathed.

He stared at her for a few minutes. Could he really be in love with her? He positioned himself closer to her so their faces were only inches apart. That answer is definitely yes.

He smiled and brushed his hand across her face. He saw her smile and scoot even closer to him. A grin spread across his face as he drifted off into sleep.

They woke up in each other's arms. Harry smiled and kissed her ever so softly. She grinned and moved closer to him.

"I love you," he whispered, kissing her again.

“Mm. I love you, too,” she sighed sleepily.

Hermione rested her head on his shoulder. He rubbed her arm gently and kissed her forehead.

“What time is it?” she groaned.

"I have no idea," he laughed.

He moaned slightly in the back of his throat as she traced small circles over his chest. He rubbed her back and smiled. Her skin was so soft.

His stomach started to twist into butterflies as she continued to trace circles on him. He laughed and started kissing her. She wrapped her arms around his neck and mixed her fingers in with his hair.

He held her softly as he kissed her. His hands slid slowly around her sides and onto her back. She pressed her body against his. Suddenly she pulled away.

“What’s wrong?” he asked.

“I think we should get up,” she whispered before giving him a little kiss.

“Are you all right?’ he sounded concerned.

“Yes. I’m fine,” she smiled.

He allowed her to slide away from him. She pulled one of the blankets with her and wrapped it tightly around her.

He rolled over on his back and watched her grab her clothes. The sheet lay across his stomach. He stretched his arms above his head. His brow furrowed as he continued to stare at her.

“Are you sure you’re fine?” he finally asked.

She smiled as she walked over to him. She leaned down and kissed him tenderly. He could see something hidden in her eyes when she pulled back.

“Yes, I’m sure,” she laughed.

He narrowed his eyes at her, “You’re going to be nervous around me now. I just know you are.”

He pushed himself up as she sat down in front of him. She placed her hand on his cheek and rubbed it gently. He felt like pulling her to him but wanted her answer first. She didn't speak though.

"I knew you weren't ready," he whispered, grabbing her hand off his cheek and holding it in both of his.

She reached over with her other hand and placed his glasses on his face, "Harry."

"I'm sorry, Hermione," he breathed out, looking away from her.

"No, no, no," she whispered, placing her hand back on his cheek and turning him to look at her again. "I'm fine. I really am. Don't apologize. It's still just a little hard for me. But you... oh Harry. You could never make me feel nervous."

She leaned into him and kissed him passionately. He placed his hands gently on her back and slowly laid back down on his back. She laughed slightly as she went with him.

Suddenly there was a peaking on the door. They both shot up and pulled their sheets tight around them.

"Get dressed," she whispered to him.

She stood up and handed his clothes to him. He pulled everything back on under the covers. He didn't look at her as she dressed. He didn't want her to feel nervous. That was the last thing he wanted.

When she had all her clothes on she walked over to the door and opened it. She looked around but didn't see anyone. Then Hedwig flew in the room over her head. She jumped a little.

Hedwig landed next to Harry on the bed and dropped a note into his lap. He looked at it for a moment then turned his face to Hermione.

"What is it?" she asked nervously.

“It’s from your parents,” he breathed.

He pushed the covers back and walked over to her. He handed her the letter and stood behind her as she opened the envelope. He read along with her.

Hermione,

We want you home NOW! We are very concerned about you! We know Harry is most likely looking after you, but Honey, we haven’t seen you since before it happened. Please come home as soon as you can. We have written to Professor Dumbledore as well. We expect you home by tomorrow. Do not argue. Harry may stay with us over Christmas vacation if he is there with you and if you’d like him to. But do please come home. Darling, we are scared for you and both your father and I would like to know that you are safe and OK. Please come home.

With so much love,

Mum

Hermione leaned back against Harry and sighed, “I don’t want to go back home. He knows where that is. He doesn’t know where we are right now. I don’t want to go somewhere he can find me.”

Suddenly she turned around and threw her arms around Harry’s neck. She started to cry onto his shoulder. He wrapped his arms tight around her and rubbed her back lightly.

“Shh. It’s all right. If you want me to stay with you and your parents over the holiday I am more than happy to. I don’t want to leave your side. You know that,” he whispered gently in her ear.

“Please do come with me,” her muffled voice sounded from his shoulder.

“I will,” he kissed her lightly on the head. “I love you, Hermione.”

She lifted her head and smiled warmly at him, "I love you, too, Harry. So much!"

She kissed him tenderly and rested her head back on his shoulder. He started to sway from side to side, slowly, rocking her gently. He rested his cheek on the top of her head and closed his eyes, taking in her scent and letting it fill him.

He could feel her breathing against him and felt her starting to calm down. Then he heard footsteps coming down the stairs. He let go of her and grabbed her hand. He pulled her into the common room area and over to the couch after closing the door. They sat down just before Dumbledore came into view.

"Ah. Harry, Hermione. I need to have a word with you," he smiled. They watched him walked over to the couch, "I have just received a letter from your parents, Hermione. They asked me to make sure you got to your home safely. Now, I must know if you want to go back."

Hermione shook her head and held tighter to Harry's hand. He rubbed the top of hers with the pad of his thumb.

"And why not?" he asked, kindly.

"Because he knows where my house is and how to get to it," she breathed. "He doesn't know we're down here. I feel safer down here."

Dumbledore nodded briefly before continuing, "You're parents are very concerned about you though. And I'm sure you miss them."

"I do miss them," she whispered.

"I thought you would. Why don't you pack a few things, both of you, and come with me to my office. I'll get you both to your house by means of Floo Powder," he smiled warmly.

Both Harry and Hermione nodded and went into their rooms. Harry was packed well before she was. But when she walked out of her room he noticed that her bed was made. He smiled to himself,

knowing now why it had taken her longer and the reason for her making her bed.

“Come along,” Dumbledore said.

They followed him up to his office and walked over to his fireplace. They waited as he retrieved his satchel of Floo Powder.

“Harry, I would like you to go first. That way you can make sure she gets there fine and I will be able to make sure she departs fine.”

“Yes, Sir,” Harry said, taking a small handful of the powder.

He walked over to the fireplace and threw it in. The flames turned a fiery green and he stepped into them. He gave Hermione a quick smile before shouting his desired destination.

He fell onto the hearth of the Granger’s fireplace with his things. He heard hurried footsteps, but couldn’t see clearly. His glasses had flown off.

“Harry! Here. Let me help you up,” he heard Mrs. Granger say above him. At first he had thought it was the pair of feet standing before him that had said this and not whom the feet had belonged to.

Mrs. Granger pulled him to his feet and handed him his glasses. He put them on thanking her and grabbed his things as for Hermione to come without anything being in her way.

He allowed Mrs. Granger to dust the soot off of him. “Whoa!” he yelled, when she reached his backside.

“Sorry, Dear. It’s a habit,” she laughed.

“Are you going to be doing the same to Hermione?” he laughed too.

“Most likely. Yes.”



Just as she said this, Hermione came tumbling into sight. Harry rushed forward and helped her to her feet. She gave him a small thank you as her mother crushed her into a hug.

“Hermione! Are you all right? Are you OK? Has he come near you?” she cried, bombarding her with questions.

“Let the poor girl go, Shannon,” Mr. Granger said, walking into the room.

Mrs. Granger reluctantly let go of her daughter, brushed some of the soot off, and turned to Harry. She pulled him towards her and crushed him with a hug also.

“Thank you for keeping her safe. You don’t know how much we appreciate it,” she sobbed.

“I can take a guess,” he managed to breath out, patting her back awkwardly. He was getting close to the point where he wouldn’t be able to breath.

“Shannon! Are you trying to send these kids into an early grave by hugging them to death?” he husband laughed.

She let go of Harry and turned to face him. He was holding on to Hermione closely, stroking her hair as she forced back tears. Harry could have sworn there was a hint of a smile on her face.

Mr. Granger released her and walked over to Harry as Mrs. Granger pulled her daughter back into a hug, both of them crying now. He extended his hand to Harry and he took it.

“Thank you, Harry,” he smiled, shaking his hand. “We really do appreciate you looking after her all summer. And if you don’t mind, I won’t be hugging you like my wife.”

“Not at all, Sir,” he laughed. “And it honestly was no problem. I care about Hermione. I would never let anyone harm her.”

Mr. Granger let go of his hand and smiled at him, "Thank you again. I'm glad she has a friend like you. Have you talked to... your other friend lately? You know, to find out why he did it?" he asked, lowering his voice.

Harry shook his head, "He tried to, but I didn't want to hear it. Actually, Sir, I hit him instead. And he hasn't been my friend since he did what he did. I honestly hate him now."

Mr. Granger nodded slowly, "That's fine. I would like to know why he did it though. You know?"

"I can't handle being in the same room as him. He tried to say he didn't know why he did it, but I was too angry to listen. If he didn't make me so angry I would listen to him so we all could know," Harry whispered as Hermione and her mother walked out of the room.

"I understand. He was both your friends and he betrayed you," Mr. Granger said, sitting down in an armchair.

He motioned for him to sit on the couch. He did as he was told and waited for him to say something else. But they sat in silence for a while.

"Harry?" he finally asked. "Has he tried to get near her at all?"

"Not that I can remember," he said, thinking back. "Wait. Once."

"Did he manage to do anything?" he asked, sitting up straight and focusing on Harry more.

"No. We had fallen asleep on my bed when I woke up and heard her crying. I was comforting when I fell asleep. It was only three or four in the morning when she had woken up crying. I can't remember. She didn't get any sleep after that though. But we were woken by my cousin, who isn't the nicest person in the world," he raised his eyebrows up at him, "He said someone was there and in walked... him."

Mr. Granger nodded slowly, "He didn't do anything did he?"

"No. He said some very nasty things to her, but I kind of scared him off after I hit him," he looked away, not sure Mr. Granger would like the thought of him punching someone.

"Ah. He didn't touch her did he?"

"No. He didn't get a chance to get very close to her. I don't really know why I hit him every time I see him. He did try to talk to me about why he did it, but I just couldn't look at him and not get angry," Harry confessed.

"I understand. It's hard to control your rage at your age. I really do understand," Mr. Granger nodded.

Harry nodded back but didn't say anything. He was concerned about Hermione. He knew she was with her mother, but he wanted to be with her. He wanted to make sure she was safe.

Mr. Granger took a guess as to what he was thinking, "Come on. Let's go see where they went to."

They stood up and headed into the dining room. They found them sitting at the table. Just sitting there. Mrs. Granger had her hand on Hermione's, who had looked like she had been crying.

When she saw Harry walk in she stood up and walked over to him. She threw her arms around him and hugged him tightly. He smiled to himself as he hugged her. He rubbed her back softly.

"Thank you," she breathed in his ear.

"For what?" he whispered.

"Later," she answered.

She let go and pulled him over to the table. She sat down and got him to sit next to her. She held onto his hand under the table.

“Hermione. Why don’t you show Harry where he’ll be sleeping,” her mother suggested.

“All right, Mum. Come on, Harry,” she stood up and he followed her.

“Alan, I’m still concerned about her,” he heard Mrs. Granger say to her husband.

Hermione lead him upstairs and into the guest room, “This is where they want you to sleep. That is if we don’t fall asleep on the couch.”

He smiled down at her and kissed her, “You want to sleep on the couch, don’t you?”

“Well, yeah. I’m use to it now. That’s where we were sleeping all school year,” she laughed.

“Until earlier this morning,” he winked.

Her eyes grew large, “Harry! Shh.”

“Sorry,” he blushed.

“No, it’s fine. Just quiet around my parents,” she blushed too.

“All right. Can I still kiss you though?” he asked.

He smiled cheekily at her and she laughed, “Of course.”

He laughed too and kissed her again, “Good.”

Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck and held him close, “I really love you, Harry.”

“Oh, I love you, too,” he smiled.

He rubbed his hand gently across her face. She smiled and ran her fingers into his messy, black hair. She smiled ever so tenderly at him,

which she got in return. She leaned up to kiss him again, but then her dad's voice rang into their ears.

"Hermione! Could you come down here for a second?"

Both of them sighed and pulled away from each other. She started to walk away when he pulled her back for a quick kiss. She blushes lightly and slipped her hand into his.

They walked down the stairs together and found her father standing at the base. He smiled at them, but when he glanced at their hands he gave them a questioning look. She gave him a weak smile and turned pink.

"Anyway. I thought I would let you know that your friend Kira is coming over to see you tomorrow. I suggest you keep it to yourself about what happened to you. You know how she is about these sort of things."

"Yeah. She wants to be a police officer when she gets out of college," Hermione sighed.

"Exactly. I know this is a touchy matter for you and I really do say, don't tell her," he laughed.

"I don't think I will," she smiled, shaking her head. "Is that all, Dad?"

"Oh, yes. That's all," he eyed their hands again and walked away. "You might want to take your things upstairs."

She nodded and pulled Harry into the living room. She picked up both their things and handed him his.

They walked back up the stairs and up to the guest room. She waited as he put his things on the bed, then grabbed his hand and headed to her own room.

When they walked in he noticed three bookshelves stuffed with books, which he had not noticed before. He gave off a soft laugh and got a questioning look from Hermione in return.

“What?” she asked.

“Nothing. Just typical for you to have all these books,” he smiled.

“Oh,” she blushed. “Thanks. I guess.”

He laughed slightly and leaned against the wall next to the door, “You’re welcome.”

He watched her set her things down and look around her room, “I’ve missed being here. Well. Not here exactly, but being with my parents.”

She was just standing there looking around her room. She smiled at a few things as she looked at them, but glared at the bed when she got to it. Then her eyes landed on Harry and they lit up. A wide smile cracked across her face.

She walked over to him and slid her arms around his chest. He smiled down at her and wrapped his arms around her. She sighed and rested against him. He felt her start shaking.

“Are you all right?” he asked, looking at her face.

There were tears running down her cheeks, “I don’t feel safe in this room. In this house. In this neighborhood. I don’t want to be here.”

He rubbed her head lightly, “It’s all right, Hermione. I love you. I’m here and you know I’ll keep you safe. I will always keep you safe.”

“Thank you, Harry,” she sobbed helplessly.

“Shh,” he whispered. “It’s all right. Just relax. If your parents send you to bed then I’ll sit in here with you until you fall asleep. Would you like that?”

He felt her nod, "Just leave me a note when you leave. I don't want to freak out again."

"Of course."

She looked up at him through tear filled eyes and smiled. She pushed up on her toes until their eyes met. Slowly she pushed her lips against his.

She moaned slightly in the back of her throat as she pushed herself closer to him. He held her tightly and parted her lips. She moaned again and he laughed against her. She didn't seem to mind at all.

She slid her hands around his body and up to his face to keep him where he was. His arms moved down around her hips and held her even closer to him. Her body was pressed against his so closely she could feel every one of his muscles flexed.

Her hand ran around his head and pulled him down with her as she rested back down completely on her feet. He moved away from the wall, forcing them even closer together. She moaned again.

He had a strong urge to pick her up and carry her to her bed, but he knew better. That was where it had happened and he knew she would not want to go near it. But he wanted her right now. She seemed to be able to read his mind and she broke the kiss.

They stood there staring at each other for a second trying to catch their breath. He smiled at her and she started to laugh. She tried to take a step backwards but he pulled her back to him.

"Not just yet," he laughed.

"Fine," she giggled.

She let him kiss her one last time then gave him a look telling him to let go. He did as he was told and leaned back against the wall. He continued to smile at her.

“What?” she asked, blushing slightly.

“You’re beautiful,” he whispered, grinning at her.

She blushed darker and rubbed the back of her neck, “No, I’m not.”

“Yes, you are. You’re so beautiful! Well. At least to me you are,” he breathed out.

“Oh, Harry. I love you,” she said with tears coming to her eyes.

“I love you, too,” he grinned, moving off of the wall and up to her. He brushed his hand over her cheek and kissed her lightly, “I hope you never leave me.”

“Trust me. I won’t,” she whispered, rubbing his arm gently.

His thoughts trailed onto something she had said earlier, “Oh. Why did you say thank you down in the dining room?”

She looked him dead in the eyes and sighed, “Because you’ve done so much for me this entire time. You’ve kept me safe. You made me feel fine, when things were bad. You’ve loved me in a way I’ve never felt before, making me feel like the only person on the planet when I’m alone with you. You make me feel strong. Just... thank you.”

The tears started to flow down her face in a steady stream. Harry wiped them away and then kissed both her cheeks. He grabbed both of her hands and placed small kisses on her knuckles. He pulled her to him and hugged her tightly.

“Hermione,” he breathed, stroking her hair over and over again.

“I love you, Harry. I really love you!” she wept.

He felt tears leak out of his eyes and he shut them, “I love you so much, Hermione!”



His tears fell into her curly hair as they both cried against each other. Hermione didn't understand why Harry was crying. She was too wrapped up in her own happiness and sadness.

Harry lifted a hand and wiped his tears off his face. "Come on," he whispered. "Let's go down into the living room."

She nodded and followed him out of her room. She stopped him in the hallway above the stairs for another kiss. He smiled as she descended the stairs. They walked into the living room and sat down on the couch. Her parents gave them a smile and returned to watching the news.

When dinner came, Harry felt a little uncomfortable. He kept thinking that they knew what he meant to Hermione and what she meant to him. As though they knew what had happened between them that morning.

There was an awkward silence over the table during the entire meal. Hermione wasn't talking at all. He knew there was something wrong, for he was pretty sure she would be talking with her parents at the least. The only thing she would do was shoot him a couple sideways glances while she ate.

Finally dinner ended and she took him back up to her room. She grabbed a book and took him into another room down the hall.

"This is my father's den," she told him when she saw him looking around.

She motioned him to sit down on the small couch that was next to the door. He did. She laid down with her head in his lap and opened her book. He started to mess with her hair as she read. Around nine o'clock, her father came up and said he wanted her to get some rest.

She pulled Harry into her room and climbed in bed with all her clothes on. He grabbed the chair from her desk and sat down beside the bed. He asked her if he could grab a book and she let him. He sat there reading as she tried to fall asleep.

He would glance at her every now and then and would see her watching him. He gave a few warm smiles and continued to read. She would smile in return, but never took her eyes off him.

## Chapter 16:

### A Midnight Conversation

It was getting later and Hermione had not fallen asleep yet. Harry had walked over to her at one time and kissed her lightly on the cheek to assure her that he would watch after her and keep her safe. She had blushed at him as he sat back down in his chair.

It was rounding on eleven when they heard her parents go to bed. They didn't make much sound, thinking Hermione and Harry were both asleep. It didn't take long before they heard the soft snoring of her father.

Suddenly Hermione spoke, "It's my fault."

"What is?" Harry asked, looking away from his book that was surprisingly interesting.

"Him raping me. It's my fault," she said, staring at nothing in particular.

"What?" he shut the book and walked over to her.

She nodded and continued, "It is. It's all my fault."

"No, it's not!" he said, crouching down beside her. "How could it be your fault?"

"I told him my parents were gone. I made him angry by saying I didn't and never had feelings for him. It's all my fault," her eyes swelled with tears.

"That doesn't make it your fault. He's the one that did it. It lies on his conscience. Not yours. Do not blame yourself for this," he ordered.

"But I am to blame," she whispered.

“No, you’re not. He is. He’s the one that over reacted about you not liking him. He’s the one to blame. He’s the insensitive jerk that only cared about himself and his unnatural needs,” Harry smiled down at her.

He stroked her hair a few times and lightly kissed her temple. He saw a few tears spill from her eyes, but she did not let them fall heavily. She reached her hand out and grabbed his. She squeezed it tightly.

“Please don’t leave me tonight,” she murmured.

“If you don’t want me to, I won’t,” he whispered gently.

She sat up and pulled on his arm. He got the hint and sat next to her. She released his hand as he wrapped his arm around her.

“It’s all right. I’ve got you. You’re safe,” he smiled.

She leaned against him and let out a shuttering breath, “I feel weak.”

“That’s because you’re tired. Come on. I’ll lye down with you.

He leaned backwards with her still leaning against him. Their heads hit the pillow and she shut her eyes. She sighed lightly and wrapped an arm around his chest. She let out another shaky breath.

“Shh. Sleep,” he breathed in her ear and before he knew it, she was asleep.

He smiled to himself and rested his head against hers. She still smelled terrific. His eyes fluttered shut as he inhaled deeply. He too drifted off into sleep.

He heard a small weeping sound in his dream and woke up. He looked down at Hermione and saw her crying. He mentally shook his sleep from him and pushed himself up slightly.

“Hey,” he whispered. “What’s wrong.”

She shook her head and mouthed, Him.

His brow furrow as he looked at her, "Oh. You had a dream about it."

She nodded and pulled him back down onto his back. She rested her head on his chest and let silent sobs erupt from her.

"It's all right, Hermione. I've got you," he whispered, gently rubbing her back.

"You won't let him near me, right?" she breathed.

"Of course not. I will never let him near you ever again."

He kissed the top of her head gently. He felt like humming to calm her down. But he didn't know anything to hum.

Her breathing was shaky against him, but he could sense her falling back to sleep. When he thought she was sound asleep he let himself go back asleep also.

He did not wake up to any crying for the rest of the night. But was roughly shaken awake by Hermione in the morning.

"Wha...?" he asked groggily.

"You need to get in the chair so my parents don't suspect anything," she whispered fiercely.

He rubbed his eyes for a second the almost tumbled off the bed to get to the chair. Hermione had grabbed his arm to keep him steady. He sat down and looked at the clock on her side table. It was only six in the morning.

"Why'd you wake me up this early?" he asked, grumpily.

"Because my parents get up at seven every morning," she sighed, laying her head back down and felling asleep instantly.

Harry shrugged and too fell asleep. He knew he would get a crick in his neck in the morning. But anything for Hermione.

A/N: It may take another few days before I post again. Then again it may not. Depends on how much my mom allows me to stay on my computer and type. lol Well please review and tell me what you thought!

## Chapter 17:

### Harry Meets Kira

There was a soft rap on the door and Harry and Hermione woke up.

“Hermione. Time to get up,” her mother called through the door.

“Kay,” she called back, rubbing her eyes.

Harry rotated his neck a few times and rubbed the back of it. He looked over at Hermione and saw her watching him.

“You all right?” he asked with a rasping, morning voice.

She smiled and nodded, “I’m just glad I got to wake up and see your face first thing again.”

“Well, I’m glad my face makes you happy,” he laughed.

She giggled, “It makes me very happy. I love your face.”

“Oh, just my face?” he joked.

“Yeah,” she grinned as he stood up and sat down, facing her, on her bed.

“You know, that makes the rest of me very sad,” he sighed.

“I love your hand also.”

“OK. So now my hand and face is happy, but my soul is dampened,” he hung his head jokingly.

“Your soul is the thing I love the second most.”

He lifted his head and cock an eyebrow at her, “And what is it that you love the most?”

“You,” she said simply.

He grinned, “That just cheered me up.”

She started laughing after he kissed her, “You are so silly.”

“Nah. I just like making you smile,” he said. His brow furrowed and then he corrected himself, “No. I love making you smile.”

She blushed and looked away from him. He chuckled and placed a hand on her cheek. He turned her to look at him and kissed her again. Only this time more passionately.

“I love you, Hermione,” he said, leaning his forehead against hers.

“I love you, too, Silly,” she giggled.

He smiled and kissed her cheek. He stood up and headed for the door.

“Get changed,” he said as he opened the door.

He shut it behind him when he walked out. She stared at the door for a few minutes hoping that he would come back in, just because she wanted him in there with her. When he did not she slowly got out of bed and changed.

She made her bed and walked over to the door. She opened it and jumped when Harry turned to look at her from beside the door. He smiled and grabbed her hand. He had only changed his shirt.

They walked down to the dining room together and found two plates of breakfast waiting for them. They sat down and picked up their forks.

“So your parents always do this?” he asked before taking a bite.

She nodded as she chewed her food. “Well, only when I have a friend over,” she said after swallowing.



“Ah,” he said with his fork before him.

They ate silently for the first few minutes. There wasn't much to talk about. Just as they did start talking, the doorbell rang.

Both Harry and Hermione watched the doorway of the dining room for a while. Then her mother walked in with a girl at her side.

“Mione!” the girl yelled, running over to Hermione.

“Hi, Kira,” she choked out as yet another person squeezed her to death.

“I've missed you. Everybody at school are complete idiots! It's nice to have someone smart to talk to,” she smiled. “Who's your friend?”

Harry had been staring at her, trying to figure out if he liked this person or not. She had long, dark brown hair. It was almost like Hermione's only not as bushy or curly. He guessed it didn't smell as good either.

She was taller than Hermione and somewhat heavier. He guessed it was only because Hermione didn't eat as much anymore. She had big, brown eyes and a friendly smile. But there was something about her he didn't like. He couldn't figure out what yet.

“Oh, this is Harry,” she smiled.

“Hi, Harry. It's very nice to meet you,” she grinned at him.

There is it, he thought. “Nice to meet you too,” he said kindly.

He saw her look him up and down. He grabbed Hermione's hand under the table and gave it a little squeeze. She looked at him for a second then gave him a very small nod.

“How long will you be here?” she asked her.

“I was hoping all day. People are so stupid at that school. I need a real conversation,” she laughed.

“Oh. Um. Harry and I were actually hoping to hang out today.” It was only half a lie.

Kira just continued to smile and looked from one to the other.

“Just us,” she added.

Harry could feel her tensing up and rubbed her hand lightly. She better get the hint, he thought.

“Oh come on. You can add me in. Besides. Three’s company,” she grinned.

“That was an old TV show,” Hermione snapped. “And the saying is, ‘Three’s a crowd’.”

“I get the feeling you don’t want to hang out with me today,” she glared.

“No. No, it’s not that. It’s just that Harry and I need to discuss some important matters that have happened at our school,” she quickly lied.

“You just don’t want me around, do you?” she asked, folding her arms across her chest.

“Go with that,” Harry breathed in Hermione’s ear.

She kicked his leg under the table and breathed back, “She’s my best friend.”

“She was eyeing me up and down!” he hissed.

“Shh,” she snapped. “Kira. I guess we can hang out for a few hours, but not all day. Will that do?”

“It’ll have to do,” she shrugged. “Since you’re done with breakfast, let’s go down to the park.”

“Which one?” Harry asked, thinking about the one by his house and hoping not that one.

“The one that’s actually a park and doesn’t those stupid swing sets and slides at it,” she smiled, gladly turning her attention back to him.

“The one a few blocks from here?” Hermione asked, an eyebrow raised.

“That’s the one,” she said still looking at Harry.

“That’s where we met,” she informed Harry. “Every time we hang out we go there.”

She gave Kira an annoyed look and laughed when she gave her an innocent smile. She shook her head and turned to Harry.

“What do you say? Want to go to the park?”

“Do I really have a choice?” he asked with a fake smile.

Hermione gave him a little laugh and stood up. He did the same and grabbed his plate. They placed their plates in the sink for Mrs. Granger and saw Kira walking towards the front door. Harry reluctantly started to follow until Hermione pushed him into the wall by his shoulders.

“Whoa! Hermione! Wha...?” he started to ask.

“I need you to do me a favor while we’re at the park,” she whispered.

“That’s fine. Anything. What is it?” he asked, calming down a little.

“Don’t ever leave my side. Don’t follow her if she wants to have a word with just you. But if she wants to have a private word with me

and pulls me out of site, move to where you can see me so I know I will still be safe. Please,” she told him.

“Of course,” he smiled, rubbing her arms lightly.

She smiled at him and kissed him lightly. She let go of him and walked after Kira. He laughed to himself and followed her. They walked down to the park and found a picnic table under a tree.

Kira sat down on the table part of it and Hermione sat next to her. Harry saw Kira hint for him to sit next to her. He had to keep himself from showing his disgust and sat down next to Hermione.

They were there for what felt like hours, but when he looked at his watch he noticed it had only been one hour. He tried to listen to the conversation that Hermione and Kira were having but found it boring and almost fell asleep. Hermione had nudged him awake on more than one occasion.

“Hey, Hermione? Can I talk to you in private?” Kira asked suddenly.

“Yeah. Sure,” she smiled, shooting Harry a look telling him to keep an eye on her.

He gave her a small nod and pretended to not be interested in what she had said. He watched them walk away out of the corner of his eye. Then Kira pulled Hermione around the corner of the building holding the bathrooms and immediately jumped up. He walked cautiously until he could see Hermione. Thank God! he thought when he saw she was fine.

“Mione. You’ve got to put in a good word in for me with Harry,” Kira whispered fiercely.

“What do you mean?” she asked, confused.

“I really want a boyfriend,” she whined.

“I thought you went for blonde haired guys with blue eyes. Harry doesn’t look like your type,” she said, forcing a fake smile as she felt her blood heat up.

“I know. But I’m getting desperate!” she complained. “Come on. He’s not that bad looking. And if he’s a friend of yours he must not be that bad. You don’t like jerks.”

Hermione swallowed as she thought of the time she was friends with a specific jerk. “I’m sorry. But he has a girlfriend. And no he’s not that bad. He’s not bad at all.”

“He has a girlfriend?” she asked, folding her arms over her chest.

“Yeah,” Hermione nodded.

“And she let him stay at your house over Christmas Holiday?”

“Yes. She trusts him.”

“Really? How much?”

“With her life. Where are you going with this?” she snapped.

“I don’t believe you. No girl trusts her boyfriend that much. Why don’t you want me to ask him out?” she shrieked in a whisper.

“Because he really does have a girlfriend!” she almost yelled.

“Yeah right,” she said, rolling her eyes.

“He does!” Her voice grew slightly louder.

“I doubt it!”

“He does and I can prove it!” She actually yelled this time.

“How?” she sneered.

“Because...” she took in a deep breath, “I’m his girlfriend.”

“Then why didn’t you just tell me that?” she laughed.

“Because I don’t want you telling my parents,” she sighed.

“Why not? You said he wasn’t bad. Why would you not tell them?” she asked with her brow furrowed.

“Because I’m scared if they know they won’t let him stay over the holiday,” she confessed in a whisper.

“That’s ridiculous! You’re parents trust you. Why would they kick him out?”

“Because they don’t know him that well. They might not trust him. And I want them to trust him.”

Kira saw tears grow in her eyes and put her arm around her friend, “If you don’t tell them and they find out they won’t trust you anymore. It happened to my brother. Remember? I called you up laughing about it.”

“I do remember that,” she laughed lightly. “But I’m nervous. He’s my first real boyfriend and I don’t want them to think badly of him. I really love him.”

“Then tell them that. I’m sure they’ll understand.”

“But there are things that have happened that might make them not trust him.”

“Like what?”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” she whispered, turning away.

“I thought I was your best friend?” she snapped, taking her arm off her and putting it at her side.

“You are my best friend. It’s just... I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Does Harry know what it is?” she smiled evilly.

“He was the first to know. I went straight to him. My parents were out of town when it happened.”

“When what happened? Come on. Tell me. I want to know,” she said, genuinely concerned now.

Hermione shook her head and started to walk away with tears in her eyes. Kira grabbed her arm and pulled her back.

“Hermione. If I really am your best friend you should tell me.”

“You’ll freak out though,” she whispered.

“Will you tell me if I promise not to freak out?” she offered.

“You have to swear on your life not to freak out.”

“Fine. I swear on my life that I won’t freak out. Cross my heart and hope to die,” she smiled, putting a little x over her heart.

“Stick a needle in your eye?” Hermione laughed.

“If I had a needle on me,” she joked.

“No, no. That’s fine,” she giggled. “All right. I’ll tell you. You also have to swear not to tell anyone. Not even your parents.”

“All right. I won’t. Just tell me.”

Hermione pulled on her jacket until they were mere inches apart. Then she whispered in her ear, “I was... um... I was... raped by

someone that was suppose to be my friend.” Her eyes had shut and her grip had tightened when she said the dreaded word.

“What!” Kira yelled.

“ Shh! You promised not to freak out! Kira please,” Hermione whimpered, wiping the tears off her face.

“Did you turn this friend in?”

“No. I didn’t know what to do. I just went straight to Harry’s. It was the only thing I could think of at the time. He wrote to my parents and told them what was going on. They wrote to his parents and his mum sent him to jail. But then we saw him at school,” she started to explain.

“Why the hell was he allowed back in school?”

“I don’t have a clue. It scared me half to death. But Harry has been looking after me since it happened and we started to get feelings for each other. I don’t want my parents freaking out about it.”

“They’d probably say that the reason you two got together was because of what happened,” Kira whispered, looking off to the right thinking.

“And I don’t want them too. I don’t like that thought. I really do love him and I don’t want anyone thinking that,” she sniffed. “Please don’t tell them.”

“All right. I won’t. But you should.”

“I know I should. I’m just scared to.”

“Since when have you been scared to do anything?” she asked but then shook her head. “Never mind. I know.”

Hermione wiped her fingers over her eyes to try and stop the tears. She watched her friend thinking for a second.



“You know. This really puts a dampen on my boyfriend hunt.”

Hermione started to laugh. “I’m sorry. Whatever happened to Michael? I thought you two were getting really close last I heard from you?”

“Ballack? We were. But then he had to go out of town for a family reunion. Just as I was thinking about asking him out too,” she said, snapping her fingers. “You know. He doesn’t have blonde hair and I like him.”

“You two have been friends since you were three years old. I would think you would like him,” she laughed.

“True. Very true.”

“Why don’t you wait for him to come back and then ask him out?”

“Because I want a boyfriend now!” she snapped.

“All right! Sorry! Don’t bite my head off.”

“Sorry. Hey, what time is it?”

“I don’t know. I don’t have a watch. Harry has one though. Come on.”

She pulled on her arm and practically dragged her back over to Harry, who had quickly seated himself where he had been. He watched them walk over to him and smiled when Hermione smiled at him.

She sat down and asked, “What time is it?”

“About eleven thirty. Why?” he said, looking down at his watch.

“I have to be home by twelve. I better go,” Kira answered.

“You going to walk home by yourself?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah. I saw that smile. You want to talk with him alone,” she added in a whisper to her.

“Thanks,” she whispered back. “I’ll see you later then.”

“Yep. Bye, Harry,” she smiled.

“Yeah. Bye,” he grunted, glad that she was finally leaving them alone.

Hermione slid her hand into Harry’s and smiled at him. She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. She could have sworn he blushed a little.

“I need to tell my parents about us,” she sighed as he started to rub her hand with his thumb.

“You mean you haven’t already?” he asked, shocked.

She shook her head, “I’m scared to.”

“Because of the way they might react about it?” he whispered.

“Yeah. Did you eaves-drop on our conversation?” she smiled, looking dead in his eyes.

“No. I’ve just worried about the same thing. But I also had thought you already told them and was concerned as to how they would react towards me today,” he said bluntly. His expression had not changed from serious.

“Oh,” she smiled left her face.

“Why haven’t you even told your mum yet?”

“The same reason. I didn’t want her say that what he did is the reason we’re together.”

“That’s what Dumbledore thought. If I hadn’t told you already,” he breathed, looking away from her to stare at the ground.

“No you hadn’t. When did he say that?”

“The day I went to his office to discuss you. I don’t like that thought very much. I kept thinking about it as I walked back to class. Then I saw you and I knew it couldn’t be true.” He continued to look at the ground.

“Then it can’t be true,” Hermione smiled, doubling over slightly to look him in the face.

He turned his head towards her and smiled. He leaned towards her and kissed her softly.

“I love you, Hermione,” he whispered tenderly.

“Good. ‘Cause I love you, too,” she smiled.

“Good,” he laughed. “Come on. Let’s go back to your house. Get away from all these people.”

“If you want to.”

They climbed off the table and started to walk through the park towards the street. Harry felt as though he were in one of those sappy love movies with mothers pushing their babies around in strollers and owners playing with their dogs all around them. He looked over at Hermione and smiled. As long as she remained his sappy love movie partner, he was OK with that.

## Chapter 18:

### Raised Voices

Harry stopped Hermione just outside her front door and kissed her lightly. He saw her blush as she turned back towards the door. She cracked it open when her parents' voices met their ears. She stopped opening the door and listened. They sounded upset.

"I want to find this boy!" they heard her father yell.

"Alan. Please lower your voice. We don't want Hermione coming home and hearing you. I don't want to frighten her in anyway," she mother snapped.

"I know. But I'm sure we would hear them if they came home," he yelled.

Harry and Hermione exchanged at look when they heard this. She held a finger to her lips as Harry forced back a laugh.

"I want to know what this is about," she said under her breath.

Harry nodded and held his hand over his mouth. They put their heads closer to the opening in the door. They both knew it was not needed, but they wanted to be sure they would hear everything.

"If that boy comes near this house again I will have him arrested by our police!" Mr. Granger yelled.

"But Dear. He's a wizard. He has ways of getting out," Mrs. Granger reminded him.

"I don't care! If I ever see him I will tear him limb from limb!" he shouted.

"I really hope he's talking about Ron," Harry breathed in her ear.

She winced at the sound of his name before shushing him.

“Then you would be arrested for man slaughter,” her mother sighed.

“I don’t care! He deserves to be killed! How dare he do that to my daughter!” he practically screamed.

“I agree he needs to be punished more than he has, but I don’t want you ending up in jail. Violence is never the answer. How many times have you told Hermione that when she was younger and was sent home from school early for hitting someone because they made fun of her?”

“More than should have been needed,” he sighed.

Harry looked down at Hermione and gave her a quizzical look. She smiled innocently up at him and turned her attention back to her parents. He gave a soft laugh before doing the same.

“Then follow your own advice.”

“This calls for violence. Being picked on doesn’t.”

“It did when it was Hermione. She never told you what they said because she didn’t want you repeating yourself to her. They kids were horrid to her.”

“And it didn’t help she always hung out with the boys.”

“That’s not the subject right now. The subject is that young man raping our daughter,” she snapped.

“Then why did you bring it up, Shannon?” he snapped back.

“I think you’ve been getting too many teenage boys as your patients at work. Can we please get back on track. What are we going to do about this?”

“I’ve told you already. We’re going to kill him. I’m going to tear him apart and hopefully have him sent to jail afterwards.”

There was a long silence afterwards. Harry took this opportunity to say something to Hermione.

“You and me are going to talk about what went on when you were younger later,” he whispered.

“Fine. Now quiet,” she snapped.

Finally her mother spoke, “You are so irrational. You need to learn to control your anger better.”

“My daughter was raped! How do you expect me to react? Like you are?”

“Do not try and say I don’t care when all that has been on my mind all year was, ‘Is she all right? Is she safe?’.”

“I never said that. I just don’t understand how you are staying so calm with a situation like this.”

“One of us has to when the other is ranting like an insomniac. I am mad. I am furious! But you are over reacting enough for the both of us. Someone needs to remain calm.”

“Then you tell me what we should do?”

“There’s nothing we can do. The young man has already been put in prison.”

“He is not a young man,” he interrupted her. “He is a cowardly boy.”

“Find. The boy has already been put in prison. What else can we do?”

“Kill him!”

“Alan,” she snapped.

“I want to make sure he can never come near my daughter again! And that is my way of doing so!”

Harry saw Hermione reach her hand into the crack off the door and do something with the knob. She slowly pulled her hand back out and shut the door. She leaned back against him and he could feel her heart pounding.

She took in a few deep breaths before jiggling the doorknob, which was now locked. She felt around for her keys and let out a sigh. She saw Harry watching her and smiled.

“I want to be able to make a sound to let them know we are hear so that they will stop talking when we walk in. But I forgot my keys,” she explained.

“Ring the doorbell. They’ll definitely stop talking when they hear that,” he pointed out.

She roller her eyes at herself and thanked him. He laughed and kissed her lightly on her cheek. She pressed the little button next to the door and heard footsteps on the other side. The door opened and her mother was smiling down at them.

“Sorry Honey. I didn’t think we had locked it.”

“That’s all right,” Hermione smiled.

Harry followed her in and then into the living room. Her father was sitting in his armchair with his face red from their discussion. He smiled at them as they sat down on the couch. Her mother came in also and sat down on the arm of her husband’s chair.

Hermione linked both her and Harry’s hands back together and took in a shaky breath. “Mum. Dad. I need to tell you two something.”

“What is it?” he father asked calmly.

She took in another breath before speaking, “Harry and I are sort of together.”

There was a small silence. Harry felt a little awkward and avoided eye contact with any of them.

“Hermione,” her mother smiled. “We figured that out.”

“What?” Harry’s head shot up to look at them.

“How?” was Hermione’s reaction.

“Your father had seen you two holding hands. You are always with him even though you are home safe. He stood outside your room this morning while you changed even though he didn’t really need to. And he stayed in your room last night, we know nothing happened,” she added quickly, “And someone that was only a friend wouldn’t do that. Hermione. We aren’t stupid. We were young once too. Even though I’m sure you like to think otherwise. We put two and two together and that was the only logical explanation.”

They both turned to her father and saw him smiling. Harry relaxed a little.

“You’re OK with it right?” Hermione asked nervously.

“Of course. As well as you’ve talked about Harry as long as you’ve known him and told us all the great things he’s done to keep you safe, why wouldn’t we be fine with it?” Mrs. Granger smiled.

“You’re always telling us these great stories about all that Harry’s has done. There is no way that we would disapprove of him,” Mr. Granger laughed. He shot Harry a warning look, “You better not hurt her though.”

Harry jumped a little, “Trust me. I won’t. I don’t want her to feel anymore pain.”



Mr. Granger laughed, "I was only teasing, but I must say, I am glad to hear it."

Harry let out a small breath of air and saw Hermione stand up. He did the same and followed her out of the room. They went up to her room.

She selected another book and pulled him into her father's den. He immediately sat down on the couch and she rested her head in his lap again. She started to read as he started to play with her hair again.

As boring as it always seemed, he didn't mind these quiet times with Hermione. He got to spend time with her and she wasn't crying about anything. He secretly prayed that they would have many more times like this when they were older and married.

He smiled at this thought and rubbed his hand across her forehead. He saw her smile from behind her book. He kissed his fingers and placed them lightly on her cheek. She laughed, but continued to read her book.

He didn't mind. The quiet was nice. He got to think about her and all he wanted to do with her as she aged together.

## Chapter 19:

### Hermione's Past

Hermione turned another page in her book and looked up. Harry was staring blankly ahead of him but his brow was furrowed. She placed her book on her stomach and reached her hand up. She gently touched his cheek and he looked down at her.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked quietly.

"About why people might want to be mean to you," he sighed.

"What do you mean?"

"Well. Malfoy's always mean to you. He's terrible to you. When we were still friends with that idiot, he was always mean to you. And all those kids your mum was talking about from when you were little," he explained.

"Oh," was all she had to say.

"What all did they say to you anyway?" he asked, taking up stroking her hair again.

"First you have to remember that when you're little, everything is a lot worse."

"I know."

"All right. Well, they would call me all sorts of names. Ones about my hair, about my teeth, about my grades, and about how many books I always carried around. One even said that if it were legal I would marry a book and have children with it. Now I know that is just a stupid thing to say, but when I was younger it really hurt my feelings."

"I bet," Harry said.

“They would always call me ugly and hideous. One even came up with a name for that.”

“Do I want to know what it was?”

“No.”

“Then don’t tell me.”

“All right. I tried to go out for sports because I enjoyed them then, but they would always be there with their friends that were already on the teams. They would watch me and always find something to make fun of me about. They’d all say I kicked like a boy, I ran like a boy, and I hit like a boy. And just to prove them right I would always hit them to show I was proud of it. It still hurt my feelings though. Of course they always went running for a teacher or a coach and would get me in trouble.”

“So you were pretty much a little tom-boy?” he laughed.

“Yeah. Pretty much.”

“Your dad said you always hung out with the guys though?”

“I did. It was the girls that made fun of me. A few years ago I ran into one that use to make fun of me and I tried to avoid her. She ran up to me and apologized. She said she had always been jealous that I always hung out with the guys. She said she had always wanted to because guys just seemed like a lot more fun to her. But of course I was the girl that did that.”

“Is that why you always hung out with me and... Is that why you always hung out with me?” he corrected himself.

She gave off a small laugh, “Yeah it is. Girls have always been so mean to me. Even Lavender and Parvati were mean to me. They still are in a way. But what always made me and my mum laugh was that

after I would hit one of the girls, one of the boys would yell, 'Nice punch!' or 'Good one!'. Of course another girl would say I was a confused boy that thought he was a girl after they yelled that. That's what always made me cry when I was talking with my mum."

"Who were they?"

"Why?"

"Because I want to show them what a beautiful young woman you have grown into and shove it in their face that you have love and they, most likely, don't," he grinned.

"Harry. You are so silly," she giggled.

"In a good way though. Right?"

"Of course."

She sat up and moved next to him after placing her book on the table next to them. He wrapped his arm around her and she leaned into him. They kissed softly a few times before she rested her head on his shoulder.

He rested his head atop hers and closed his eyes, "You know. Our pasts are sort of the same. Except I was always the one getting hit."

"Awe. My poor baby," she pouted, rubbed his hand with the tips of her fingers.

"I know," he laughed. "One time I managed to get on top of the chimney of the kitchens. Of course I didn't know how then but now I do."

"Why'd you go up there?" she giggled.

"Dudley and his gang of fatties were chasing me."

At this she fell into his lap laughing out loud. He smiled and stroked her hair a few times.

“I’m glad I was never chased,” she managed to breathe out, sitting back up.

“I’m glad to hear that. They never did those sorts of things to me though. They just beat me up. Which can make you cry but I took it like a man,” he joked.

“Good. It’s nice to know you’ve always been strong spirited,” she continued to giggle.

“At least you always remain strong minded. You were proud of who you were and you stayed that way,” he kissed her cheek lightly.

“Well. I did start carrying my books in my book bag after they made fun of me for a month straight.”

“Did any guys ever make fun of you?”

“No. They knew better after they saw me hit one of the guys the first time. That was the only time I ever thought boys were smarter than girls. Then I went to Hogwarts and saw your grades. Now I know better,” she smiled innocently.

“Thanks,” he grunted.

She laughed again and he kissed her. He pulled her to his chest and wrapped his other arm around her.

“I’m glad you’re smiling and laughing for once.”

“What about yesterday morning?” she asked.

“Not counting that.”

“Why not?”

“Because you were completely insane yesterday morning,” he laughed.

“Yeah I was. But it did give me the courage and strength to... you know.”

“Yeah. I know. Even though I said you weren’t ready.”

“I wanted to do it at a time when I wasn’t scared and could handle just about anything. I actually handled it better than I imagined I would when you fell asleep. I thought I was going to start crying but... I guess you just made it OK. And I thank you for that,” she smiled warmly up at him.

“And you are very welcome,” he smiled back.

She giggled again and wrapped her arms tight around him. Then they heard her father’s voice trail up the stairs and down the hall to them.

“Dinner time.”

They stood up and headed into the hall. He stopped her just above the stairs.

“Do you want me to stay in your room again tonight?” he whispered.

“If you don’t mind,” she smiled.

“Of course not.”

She gave him a quick kiss before heading down into the dining room. He followed with a smile on his face.

Dinner was much better than the night before. Everyone was talking this time. Hermione and her mother talked most of the time while Harry and her father talked.

Just as everyone was finishing up, her mother told them that she had rented a few movies while they had gone to the park. After they put there dishes in the sink they all went into the living room and sat down as she put the first movie in. But around eleven o'clock, her parents ducked out and went to bed.

Hermione moved as close to Harry as she could and leaned up against him as they continued to watch the movie that was in. Harry's arms wrapped tightly around her and he held her to him. At one point Hermione had turned the light out so that the only thing to cast shadows was the television.

They lost interest in the movie and gained more interest in each other. They started to kiss and around twelve were starting to fall asleep with one another.

Harry's head was leaning against the back of the couch and Hermione's was on his chest. Their arms wrapped tight around each other like they had been all through the school year.

## Chapter 20:

### An Eruption of Anger

“Awe. Would you look at that?” Mrs. Granger sighed as she and her husband walked into the living room the next morning.

Mr. Granger laughed and walked over to Harry and Hermione sleeping on the couch. “So adorable,” he joked.

His wife hit him on the back of the head with a laugh and walked into the kitchen. He smiled and gently placed his hand on Harry’s shoulder. He shook him lightly and saw his eyes crack open.

“Wha...?” he mumbled.

“It’s nine o’clock. Wake Hermione up,” he informed a half open-eyed Harry.

Harry yawned and barely watched Mr. Granger walk into the kitchen. He looked down and saw Hermione dead asleep. He closed his eyes and rested his cheek on her head. He wasn’t ready to get up yet.

There was a loud clang of pots in the kitchen and both Harry and Hermione jumped completely awake. “Damn it,” they heard her father mutter.

Hermione looked up at Harry and smiled. He smiled back down at her and kissed her lightly. She rested her head back down on his chest and yawned.

“What time is it?” she whispered sleepily.

“Your dad said it was nine,” he whispered back, just as tired as she was.

She moaned and pushed herself off of him. She rubbed her eyes for a few seconds then turned to smile at him again. He chuckled lightly and leaned forward to get off the back of the couch.



“Breakfast!” her mother called from the dining room.

Harry groaned as he pushed himself off the couch and helped Hermione up. She slipped her hand into his as they walked around the couch and into the dining room. There were only two plates of food on the table.

“Are you guys eating?” Hermione asked with a yawn.

“We can’t. Your mother and I have to go into work today,” Mr. Granger answered before shoving the last bit of his toast into his mouth.

“We’ll be back around seven. You and Harry will have to feed yourselves lunch and dinner,” Mrs. Granger said, piling the dirty dishes into the dishwasher. She walked up to Hermione, looking a bit stressed out, and kissed her on the head, “We have to go. We’re going to be late.”

“Bye,” Hermione said, slightly confused as to what happened.

They heard the front door close and then the car start. Harry and Hermione looked at each other for a while then slowly started eating. Harry himself started to feel a little confused. I am only half awake, he reminded himself.

They finished eating and put their plates and silverware in the dishwasher. “What should we do?” Hermione asked, leaning against the counter.

“I don’t know. What do you want to do?” he murmured, rubbed the back of his neck. He knew what he would like to do but he didn’t want to say it.

“I have no idea,” she sighed, throwing her head back in annoyance.

There’s her neck, he grinned in his head. No! She won’t want to, so don’t think it.

Hermione moved her head back into place and looked at Harry staring at her, "What?"

“Nothing,” he lied, quickly turning away.

She smiled and shook her head. Then she ended up staring at him instead. He looked extra handsome today for some reason. She felt her feet walk her over to him and her arms wrap around his neck all by themselves.

He turned back to her and smiled. His hands rested on her hips and she kissed him lightly at first, but then with more passion.

The next thing they both knew they were on the couch with Harry lying over Hermione. “Gently,” she whispered in his ear. He nodded and pulled the blanket that was on the back of the couch over them.

[illegible]

“I love you, Hermione,” he whispered gently, letting her push his bangs out of his eyes.

"I love you, too," she whispered back, feeling completely spent.

He grazed her cheek with his hand and kissed her lightly. She smiled and ran her fingers into his black mess of hair. He grinned and kissed her again. She laughed against his lips and hugged him tightly.

Suddenly they fell onto the floor. Hermione started laughing and fixed the blanket around them. Harry moved underneath her until he felt comfortable. She moaned slightly as he moved. He grinned and pulled a pillow off the couch, putting it under his head.

She wrapped her arms around his chest best she could and rested her head on his chest with a smile on her face. He rubbed her back gently as she started to fall asleep. His own eyes shut and he too feel asleep.

Harry woke up at the feeling of Hermione getting off of him. He watched her blurred outline put on her clothes and turn to look at him. He heard her giggle and saw her pick something up. She threw it at him and his boxers fell onto his face.

“Get dressed,” she giggled.

“Thanks,” he smiled.

He walked up to her and pulled her into his arms, “I don’t remember them teaching us that spell in school.”

"You really had been thinking about it as long as I had," he laughed.

“Where’s my ring?” she almost yelled.

“What?” he asked, letting go and also looked down at her hand.

Sure enough her ring was gone. "Oh no," she whined.

Harry watched her run out of her room and down the stairs. He didn't follow her this time. Instead he walked over to where her wand was and started to shuffle papers around on the desk it was laying on.

"I can't find it!" she cried, running back into her room.

"I did," he smiled.

He picked up the little ring off her desk and walked over to her. She sighed with relief as he slid it back onto her finger.

"Thank you," she breathed. "I don't usually take it off unless I'm showering. I get a weird feeling when I'm not wearing it. I was going to cry if I had lost it." She looked up to find him smiling, "What?"

"Oh, nothing. I'm just glad you never take it off," he blushed.

"Well, you did give it to me," she turned a soft shade of pink herself.

He smiled shyly, "Does that mean it's more important?"

"Yes, it does," she grinned. "It means more to me than anything else. Well, except maybe you."

He laughed and grabbed her hand, "Let's go back down stairs."

She nodded with the grin still on her face. They walked down the stairs with both of their faces still a little pink. Harry helped her pick up the blanket and pillow off the floor and put them on the couch back the way they were.

Hermione sat down and sighed. "Is something wrong?" he asked nervously, sitting down next to her and wrapping his arm around her.

"I'm not sure," she whispered.

Harry sat quietly for a second, trying to think of something that might have caused her sudden change of emotion. "Is it something I've done?"

"I'm not sure," her voice grew softer.

"Is it what we did down here?"

"I think so," she breathed, making it hard for him to hear her.

He bit down on his bottom lip and slowly pulled his arm off her. He scratched the back of his head nervously and looked at his knees.

"I'm sorry," he said, just as quietly as her.

"For what?" she asked shocked.

"I don't know. I just am," he sighed.

"Well. Don't be. For whatever it is. Don't be," she smiled, placing her hand on his and rubbing it gently.

He looked up and gave her a half smile, "I still don't think you're ready to go this far in our relationship."

"I might not be. But it's a little late for that, isn't it?" she sighed.

He laughed lightly and tried to look away. She placed her other hand on his cheek and forced him to continue to look at her. She smiled warmly at him, but he did not return it. He felt sad, but he could not explain it. Not even to himself.

"Harry?" she asked quietly.

"I don't know," he whispered. Sadness was in his voice.

She kissed him lightly and wrapped her arms around him, hugging him tightly. He slid his arms around her waist and held her back. He

forced back tears that were coming to his eyes for a reason he did not know. She leaned them back to rest on the couch, still holding onto one another.

They sat there for a while. Harry felt as though he could fall asleep like that with her, but something in him would not let him. He thought that Hermione might have fallen asleep, until he felt her take in a shaky breath that was released in a silent sob.

He rubbed her back lightly and kissed her shoulder. "What's the matter?" he asked softly.

"I feel angry," she whimpered.

"Why?" he whispered, not wanting to upset her anymore. He loosened his hold on her and leaned back to look at her.

"I keep thinking about him and it just angers me. I don't want to keep thinking about it. I want to hurt him," she sobbed on his shoulder.

Then suddenly she stood up and started pacing around. Her breathing was fast and filled with fury. Tears leaked from her eyes. Harry knew not to go to her and that she just needed to get it out of her system.

She let out a scream of anger and he stood up. He slowly walked over to her, but stopped short.

"I want to hurt him! I want to hit him! Just once!" she yelled.

Harry felt he couldn't just stand there and watch her. He closed the space between them and lightly placed his hand on her shoulder. She turned towards him crying.

"I hate him!" she screamed.

Then she started to hit Harry in the chest, not hard but just enough to get anger out. He just stood there and took it, allowing her to get as

much anger and hate out as she could. He wanted her to get better and somehow he knew this would help.

One of her punches hurt but he forced himself to not say anything. She stopped hitting him and rested her fists against him. She started to ball and Harry pulled her into the tightest hug he could manage.

“I’m sorry,” she wept. “I’m so sorry.”

“No. It’s fine,” he whispered, gently stroking the back of her head.

“I’m sorry,” she cried.

“Shh.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to hit you.”

“Shh.”

He kissed her head lightly and held her closer. She continued to cry against him for an hour. He finally coaxed her to sit down on the couch.

“Are you mad at me?” she sobbed.

“About what?” he asked calmly.

“Hitting you?”

“No,” he said bluntly.

“Really?”

“I’m not mad at all. You need to get it out of your system somehow. Plus. I just want you to get better. I love you, Hermione,” he smiled, kissing her cheek.

She gave him a tear filled smile and wiped her face on her sleeve over and over again. He smiled and used his sleeve to help her. She

laughed lightly and gave him a quick kiss. He smiled and rubbed her cheek with his thumb.

“I think we’re both having a shitty day,” he laughed.

“But it was fine until we came back down here,” she sighed. “I wonder what happened.”

“Let’s just forget all the bad things that happened today.”

“All right. That might be best.”

He smiled tenderly at her and kissed her cheek again. Then his brow furrowed. “I’m hungry,” he laughed.

“I am too,” she agreed, laughing with him.

They stood up, hand in hand, and went into the kitchen to see if they could find anything to eat.

A/N: Sorry for the delay. Having a hard time thinking right at the moment. Had huge writer’s block. Hopefully my next post won’t take as long. lol Please review!



## Chapter 21:

### Ginny Visits

The days passed by and Christmas was just around the corner. Hermione started to feel a little anxious. She didn't know what to get Harry and was almost frightened to ask him what he wanted. She didn't think that she would be able to get him anything that would possibly amount to the ring he had bought her only months before.

Harry could read this in her eyes. He tried to think of ways to let her know he didn't want anything but he couldn't think of anything at all. Then Christmas Eve was about to round the corner and he knew he needed to say anything, for she was starting to look nervous.

He pulled her to the side one day when they and her parents were taking an evening walk to look at all the lights on the houses. "Hermione. I need to tell you something," he said quietly

"What is it, Harry?" she asked nervously.

"You don't need to get me anything for Christmas," he smiled.

She blushed but didn't say anything.

"All I want for Christmas is to spend it with you. You should know that," he whispered in her ear.

"So I don't have to worry about it anymore?" she giggled.

"No. You don't," he chuckled.

Harry looked over at her parents and saw them talking, waiting for them to catch up. He quickly kissed her on the cheek and they joined back up with her parents.

Hermione felt better after he said this to her. She still felt she needed to get him something but nothing came to mind. But in her heart she knew it didn't really matter.

On Christmas Eve morning, Harry gently shook her awake. Her eyes cracked open and her lips curled into a sleepy smile. He brushed her hair out of her face and kissed her lightly.

“Good morning, Star-shine,” he whispered softly, smiling at her in return.

He rubbed her back lightly as she nuzzled into his chest more and groaned at being woken up.

“Hermione,’ he laughed lightly. “Get up.”

He threw the covers off of him and tried to stand up, but she pulled him back down. He laughed and pushed her arms away. He stood and walked over to the door to head to his room after putting his glasses on. She slowly pushed herself up to watch him.

He grinned at her as he shut the door. He walked to the room he was suppose to be staying in and got changed as quick as he could. When he finished he walked back to her door and leaned next to it waiting for her to come out.

He heard the door open. He turned to find her smiling at him, walking out of her room. She grabbed his hand and they walked down to the dining room for breakfast.

“Mum. What’s going on?” Hermione asked when they saw her parents running around.

“Nothing. Just need to go do some shopping for a little bit and trying to make sure you two have enough to eat for breakfast,” she answered, handing both of them a plate of food.

“Someone is here to see you two also,” her father said, picking up his keys. “She’s in the living room. You may eat in there if you’d like.”

“Is it Kira?”

“No. We have to go, Sweetie.”

They watched them walk out of the house. She shrugged at Harry and walked into the living room. She stopped dead in her tracks when she saw Ginny standing next to the fireplace.

“What are you doing here?” she asked angrily. “Your brother’s not with you is he?”

“No. He actually sent me,” Ginny said, turning dark red.

“Why?” Harry snapped.

“He wanted me to give you a message.”

“I don’t want to hear it,” Hermione whimpered, trying to back out of the room.

Harry put his hand on her back to stop her. He was trying to figure out what it is he might have wanted to tell them. He thought back on what he had said to him the one night he had hit him.

“Wait,” he whispered in her ear. “I want to hear this.”

“What! Why!” she whispered back.

“Because I want to know if I still need to kick his ass or not. Plus he tried to tell me he didn’t know why he had done what he did. Let’s just hear what it is,” he said, rubbing her back lightly.

“Fine,” she snapped.

They walked over to the couch and sat down. Ginny cautiously sat down in the armchair and smiled nervously at them.

“What is it he wanted to tell us?” Harry asked, placing both his and Hermione’s plates on the coffee table.

“It’s actually kind of long,” she pulled a piece of paper out of her pocket and unfolded it, “I first want to say I’m sorry for what happened, Hermione.”

“Just tell us what he said,’ Harry egged.

“Right. Sorry. He of course says he is sorry and he said he truly doesn’t know why he did what he did. He tried to explain what had happened that day but it’s blurry to him. Like in his head when he thought about it, it wasn’t a clear picture or memory. He doesn’t even remember himself doing it. He said he thinks that someone was making him do it.”

“But who?” Harry snapped.

“I think I know,” she lowered her voice.

“Who?” Hermione spat out quickly.

Ginny went pink. She opened her mouth to speak but nothing came out.

Harry studied her for a little bit. “It was Malfoy, wasn’t it?” he snarled, narrowing his eyes at her.

“I think so. I know he did something to someone but I don’t know for sure,” she quickly said, going completely red. “To tell you the truth, Ron got me to start up that little thing with Malfoy to see if I could find out anything. I did but I’m not sure if it was Ron that he had done something to.”

“Ginny, you need to find out!” Harry practically yelled.

He saw Hermione nodded out of the corner of his eye and felt her tense up. He slid his hand into hers and squeezed it lightly. A tear fell onto his hand.

Ginny was watching Hermione intently. “I will, Harry. Trust me. I will. I’m so sorry, Hermione.”

She walked over to Hermione and placed her hand gently on her shoulder. She smiled weakly and walked over to the fireplace. She disappeared in a burst of green flames.

Harry pulled Hermione to him and rubbed her arm lightly as she cried. She's thinking about it. I just know she is.

He let out a sigh and leaned them both back against the couch. He rocked her slightly. She clung to his shirt and continued to cry.

## Chapter 22:

### Christmas Eve Cheer-up

“What happened?” Mrs. Granger asked, walking into the living room well after Ginny left.

There was a large bag in her hand. She was watching Harry rock a still crying Hermione back and forth.

“She can’t stop thinking about it,” he whispered sadly.

“Oh, here,” she sighed, setting down her bag and walking over to Hermione. “Let’s go get some hot coco.”

She helped her to her feet and walked her off into the kitchen. Mr. Granger picked up the bag she had set down and put it in the hall closet along with the one in his hand. Harry watched him do so, thinking all the while.

“Mr. Granger?” he asked cautiously, not sure if he was in a good mood after doing some last minute Christmas shopping.

“Yes, Harry?” he answered calmly.

He sighed with relief to himself before speaking again. “I was wondering if you would happen to have any floo powder?”

“Yes, actually I do. We keep some for when Hermione needs to go to Diagon Alley,” he informed him. He walked over to the mantle piece and pulled a small cup off of it. “Where do you need to go?”

“To Gringotts. I want to change some of my wizarding money into muggle money.”

“All right,” he smiled, holding the cup out to him.

He took a small pinch of it and stepped into the fireplace. He stopped just before throwing it into the fire and looked at Mr. Granger.

“How much do you think a dozen lilies would cost?” he whispered as quietly as possible.

He smiled warmly at him, "I'm not quite sure. I've never bought lilies before. Maybe around thirty pounds or so at the most."

“OK. Thanks. Diagon Alley!” he shouted, throwing down the floo powder.

He fell into the Leaky Cauldron and was greeted by many people he didn't know. He smiled briefly at all of them and walked towards the back door that led to the brick wall hiding Diagon Alley.

[illegible]

Hermione sat with her mother sipping the hot coco and felt lonely. "Where's Harry?" she finally asked.

“He had to go get something,” her father answered as he walked passed the dining room doorway.

“Get what? From where?” she called to him, but he didn’t answer.

“Maybe it’s a surprise to make you feel better, Sweetie,” Mrs. Granger smiled.

Hermione blushed and went back to her hot coco. They she heard someone fall out of the fireplace and onto the hearth in the living room. She looked in that direction and saw her father walk passed the doorway again.

She could hear him whisper something to Harry but could depict the words. Then he popped his head into the dining room.

“Harry and I need to go to the store for something. We’ll be back shortly,” he smiled.

"I know that smile. I think I was right, Dear," Mrs. Granger winked.

"Mum. If you are right, don't spoil the surprise," she grinned.

She watched Harry and Mr. Granger get into his car and drive off. I wonder what it is, she thought, biting her lower lip with a smile.

[illegible]

“How far away is the nearest flower store?” Harry asked, checking to see if his wand was still in his inside jacket pocket.

“Not far. How are you going to keep Hermione from seeing them?” he shot him a look with a raised eyebrow.

“I have my ways,” he laughed.

“And what way is that?” he too laughed.

“Magic,” he grinned. They both laughed more as they drove towards a flower shop.

Finally they found one that wasn't already closed for Christmas. Thankfully for Harry, they still had several lilies left.

He was amazed at all the different types there were. No wonder flowers had never seemed interesting to him.

Mr. Granger watched him look around and smiled. He walked up behind him and pointed at one type particular. "Hermione has always been a fan of Tiger Lilies out of all the others."

“Thanks,” he laughed.

He nodded at him. "Her mum on the other hand prefers the Calla Lilies. They usually see eye-to-eye on things, but with this they disagree," he laughed

Harry chuckled slightly, staring at the flowers. "Now what color to pick," he said to himself.



He looked at all of them and couldn't decide between three of them. He just ended up getting four of each color.

He was so glad that he had gotten more than eighty pounds out, or he would have needed to borrow money from Mr. Granger and that was something he didn't want to do. Plus he wanted to buy these with his money.

He picked out a vase that he thought suited her well to go along with them. After he paid for them, he got the woman behind the counter to fill the vase up with water. As they walked out of the store he thought to himself how much that woman was smiling at him.

Apparently Mr. Granger had been thinking the same thing, for he said, "I think she knew, Harry."

He laughed in an embarrassed way and looked out the window for the rest of the drive back home. Wow. I consider Hermione's house home now. He let out a small laugh as they turned into driveway.

He pulled out his wand and stuck the flowers into the vase. He whispered the disappearing spell and got out of the car. He ran up to his room as carefully as he could and set the vase down on the desk in the room. He would have to put the finishing touches on it later.

He walked down into the dining room and found Hermione still sipping her hot coco. There was a mug sitting on the place next to her and she smiled at him. He could tell she was still upset. The sadness had not completely left her eyes yet. He smiled back at her none-the-less and sat down.

"I thought maybe you would be cold after going outside in the snow," she smiled.

"It wasn't that bad, but thank you very much," he grinned, sipping some of the hot coco.

Hermione kissed him softly on the cheek and looked out the window. "Good grief. Look how dark it is out there!"

Harry too looked out the window, "Damn! It wasn't that dark a minute ago. Do you think maybe we're going to have a snow storm?"

"I don't know. Let's go check."

They stood up and headed into the living room. Her parents were getting the bags out of the closet.

"We'll be up stairs for a little while," her mother smiled.

They watched them walk up the stair and out of sight. Hermione shrugged and sat down on the couch, followed by Harry. Their hot coco was still in their hands.

Hermione grabbed the remote and turned on the television. She set it back down on the coffee table and leaned into Harry, pulling her legs onto the couch and her knees to her chest. He smiled and wrapped his arm around her.

They sipped on their hot drinks as the commercials droned on. Finally the local weather came on the screen.

"We have just found out that a blizzard is about to hit the area. This will be a big one. We advise that everyone get home as quickly as they can and stay indoors. The temperature will be well below freezing. Parents do not let your young ones go out and play in it until tomorrow. It looks like we are going to be having a very white Christmas. For all of you that are really in the holiday spirit this year, Merry Christmas," the weatherman smiled.

Both Harry and Hermione looked out the window again, but this time to see a sheet of white falling down in a heap. They looked at each other and then the television again.

"Get out all your blankets and sweaters," Harry pulled the blanket off the back of the couch and wrapped it around them causing Hermione to blush, "This may cause a power outage," the weatherman continued.

And at that the power went out. Hermione squeaked at the sudden darkness and moved closer to Harry.

He put his mug down and pulled his wand out of his jacket. He pointed it at the fireplace. "Incendio," he whispered and flames shot up from the logs.

He felt Hermione giggle. He smiled down at her and picked his mug back up, leaning into the couch.

Hermione leaned against him and let her legs rest on the couch peacefully. Harry grinned and sipped his coco.

They stared into the fire, feeling lost in one another. Her scent filled his senses and he started to feel lightheaded, but in a good way.

"Damn it!" they heard her father yell. "Shannon, where's a flash light?"

"Down stairs," she answered.

They could hear him bumping into things as he headed towards the stairs. He came into view and stopped at the sight of the fire.

"How'd you get it up so fast?" he asked shocked.

"Magic," Harry smiled simply.

"Lucky," he mumbled and walked into the kitchen.

Hermione started to laugh as her father continued to mumble his complaints to himself. He walked back into the living room and looked at the Christmas tree with a sigh.

"I guess it's not use to put lights on it, huh?"

"Nope. Sorry, Dad," Hermione sighed, leaning her head back to look at him.

“Well. We don’t need lights. It can be light free,” he nodded with a satisfied smile, actually liking the idea. “You two are still going to help us decorate it, right?”

“Of course, Dad. I do that with you guys every year. And now Harry can too,” she smiled.

Harry grinned at her before turning to Mr. Granger, “I’d love to join in on one of your traditions, Sir.”

Mr. Granger nodded at him then laughed. “I guess seeing this little romantic scene with you two put me in a better mood.”

Both Harry and Hermione’s faces burned dark red, but no one could tell by the firelight. At least Harry hoped not. Then he heard Mr. Granger laugh again before heading back up the stairs.

“Damn,” he whispered.

“What?” Hermione giggled, still feeling embarrassed at what her father had said.

“I was hoping he wouldn’t see me turn red,” he laughed, hanging his head in a laugh towards his mug.

“I guess he saw us both turn red then,” she continued to giggle.

Harry smiled at her and kissed her lightly. “I love you, Hermione.”

“I love you, too, Harry,” she grinned.

He kissed her again before turning back to the fire to stare into it some more. She did the same after resting her head on his shoulder.

Harry felt lost in a daze when he barely heard the footsteps of her parents heading down stairs. Both him and Hermione jumped when they heard her mother ‘Awe’ from the bottom of the stairs.

“Mum!” she snapped.

“Sorry, Honey,” she smiled.

They walked into the living room carrying several boxes. They set them down by the tree and headed into the kitchen. Her dad came back out with a box of matches in his hand. His wife had several candles in her arms.

Hermione helped her mother place the candles at different places on the coffee table and mantle piece. Mr. Granger lit all the candles and Hermione pulled Harry to his feet. He set his mug down and helped with decorating the tree.

When they were done, Mr. Granger stepped back and looked at it. “It’s just not the same without lights, is it?”

“It’ll be fine, Dad,” Hermione reassured him with a hug.

He rubbed her arms lightly and smiled. “I guess you’re right,” he said, kissing the top of her head.

Mrs. Granger hung a piece of mistletoe over the bottom of the stairs and the doorway leading into the kitchen. Her husband stopped at the bottom of the stairs and waited for her to join him. They shared a small kiss before turning back to Harry and Hermione.

“We’re going to go to bed now. Need to get up early for Santa,” her father grinned

Mrs. Granger laughed as they headed up the stairs. Harry turned towards a laughing Hermione.

“Please tell me he doesn’t believe in Santa Claus,” he begged.

“No. He just likes to think I still believe in Santa,” she giggled.

“When did you stop believing?” he laughed, sitting back down on the couch.

“When I was five,” she rolled her eyes, sitting down next to him. “I caught them sticking the presents under the tree. How about you? When did you stop believing?”

“The minute I didn’t get my first Christmas present that I can remember,” he sighed, putting his arm back around her.

“What?”

“I live with the Dursleys remember?” he laughed.

“That’s no excuse.”

“Well, technically I did get a present, but it was a lump of coal,” he shrugged. He leaned forward and poked his finger into his mug, hoping it was at least warm. No such luck.

He started to put it in his mouth to lick off the coco that was left, but Hermione grabbed his hand and licked it off for him, giggling. He started laughing and kissed her.

“That makes up for that lump of coal you got,” she blushed.

“If you keep that up, you’re going to get a lump of coal this year,” he smirked.

She rolled her eyes and playfully hit him on the chest. “Did you do anything to deserve that coal?”

“No. That was before I found out I was a wizard and could fight back,” he laughed. “God. When I turn seventeen, the Dursleys won’t know what hit them.”

“Harry!” she snapped.

“Oh come on. Just a little bit of pay back?” he pouted at her.

She giggled and hid her face in his chest. When she came back up, there was no laugh on her face but he could see it in her eyes. "No," she said sternly.

"Fine. But know I'm only not doing it for you."

"All right," she started giggling again.

He grinned at her and kissed her again. When he pulled back she yawned. "Why don't we go to bed?" he suggested.

She nodded sleepily and they headed up stairs. They shared a much longer and more passionate kiss beneath the mistletoe first.

Harry waited outside her room as she changed. He didn't feel like bothering to change, at least not yet. He climbed into bed with her and she nuzzled into him, sighing affectionately. He kissed her forehead lightly and felt her fall asleep instantly.

After a few minutes, he slowly and gently slid her off him. He got out of bed as quietly as he could and headed to his room, leaving her door open for when he would go back in.

He walked over to the desk and made the flowers reappear. He heard her parents start walking around and stood perfectly still, trying not to make a sound.

He stood there for several minutes as they headed down stairs and came back up going into their room again. He sighed with relief when they stopped making any noise. He grabbed the flowers and headed down stairs to find a pen to write with.

He set the flowers on the coffee table and headed into the kitchen, thanking her parents in his head for not putting out the fire. He grabbed the first pen he found and went back into the living room.

He sat down on the couch and pulled the small note card towards him. He thought for a second as to what it was he had planned on writing on it. When he finally remembered, he wrote it down as neatly as he

possibly could and made sure that the 'my' on it was as dark as he could get it. It wouldn't make any sense if it didn't stand out more.

He untied the string it was on and loosely tied it around the vase, letting it hang over the wide bottom. He smiled down at it, happy with the entire thing. He placed the other, smaller vase of flowers in the middle of the coffee table. There were fewer flowers in it, but there didn't need to be a lot.

He stood up with Hermione's flowers in his hand and stared at the tree. He smiled to himself and went back up to her room.

He set the flowers next to her bed, directly where she would see them and grabbed his wand before heading back down the stairs. He smiled to himself and pointed his wand at the tree. His smile grew as he looked at what he had done.

Feeling very tired, he looked down at his watch, thankful that it didn't need electricity to work. It was nearly two in the morning and seeing the time that late made him yawn.

He headed back up to Hermione's room and gently put his wand down. He crawled back into bed, careful not to wake her up and didn't bother getting under the covers. He planned on getting up in three hours to make the surprises much better.

He wrapped his arm around Hermione's waist and buried his face in her hair. It was his favorite scent to fall asleep to.



## Chapter 23:

### The Grangers' Sweet Surprise

Hermione woke up with a yawn. She felt behind her but no one was there. She opened her eyes in shock and the first thing she saw was a vase of Tiger Lilies on her nightstand. She smiled and reached a hand out to the note attached to it.

Lilies for my Lily Evans.

I love you more than you know,

Harry

She bit down on her bottom lip and grinned. She could feel her cheeks flush. "Where is he?" she whispered, throwing her covers back.

She didn't bother to change or get her robe, but instead grabbed his jacket off the chair at her desk. She slipped it on, finding out just how small she was compared to him, and headed down stairs.

Harry heard the footsteps and stifled a yawn. Maybe he shouldn't have stay up so late last night. He looked down at his watch and saw it was almost six in the morning. He looked up when the footsteps grew louder.

Hermione appeared at the bottom of the stairs wearing the biggest grin he had ever seen. He smiled back and walked over to her. He pulled her into his arms and kissed her deeply.

"Merry Christmas, Hermione," he whispered gently.

"Merry Christmas, Harry," she whispered back.

"Did you like your gift?" he asked casually.

“I loved it! And I find it very flattering that you consider me your Lily Evans,” she blushed, kissed him again.

He smiled shyly at her, “I just thought maybe this was what my dad felt like when he was with my mum.”

“I loved the little saying on it. ‘Lilies for my Lily Evans’. That just made it. Very creative and beautiful,” she smiled, biting down on her bottom lip again. “But how did you know I liked Tiger Lilies?”

“Your dad told me. I just wanted to show you that you were my Lily and he said you preferred Tiger Lilies. He also said your mum always liked Calla Lilies better,” he whispered, pointing at the coffee table.

“You got my mum flowers too?” she gasped with a smile. “Oh my God! What did you do to the tree!” She looked as though she were almost jumping out of her skin as she walked towards the tree.

“To answer your first question, yes I did. And the second question. I remember your dad being upset there were no lights on the tree so I gave it lights,” he smiled, watching her staring at the tree in amazement.

The small twinkling dots sparkled in her eyes and gave her a glow he found made her look even more beautiful than ever. He walked over to her and wrapped his arms around her from behind. He kissed her cheek and twisted her back and forth ever so slightly.

“Harry, you are so amazing!” she sighed. “Why did you do all this?”

“You’ll find out when your parents get down here,” he whispered softly in her ear, closing his eyes and inhaling her again. “Why do you smell so damn good?”

“It’s just my shampoo,” she whispered, her own eyes were closed as he continued to sway them back and forth.

“You still smell really good,” he sighed, resting his chin on her shoulder and burying his face in her hair again.

He felt and heard Hermione let out a long, loving sigh and smiled. She slowly opened her eyes and looked out the window. She kissed his arm and he came back to his senses.

“It’s still snowing,” she whispered gently.

Harry reluctantly let his hands slid around to her arms and then slid down them until they were holding hands. She let go of one of his hands and pulled him to the window. They sat down on the large sill that stuck two feet out away from the window. Harry sat behind her and wrapped his arms back around her wanted to take in her scent and feel completely lost in her again.

“Wow. It hasn’t gotten any lighter out,” she sighed, leaning back into him.

“It’s only six in the morning, Hermione,” he breathed, kissing her neck gently and then her cheek.

She swatted his arm jokingly, “No silly. Look at the sky.”

“I’d rather not,” he groaned, kissing her temple, causing her to close her eyes again. “It’s cold over here.”

“I feel fine.”

“Well duh. You not only have me wrapped around you but you also have my jacket on. Which I must say looks very nice on you,” he smiled.

She grinned innocently as he stood up and got the blanket from the couch. He threw it over his shoulders long ways before sitting back down behind her and wrapping her in both his arms and the blanket.

She kissed his cheek before he nuzzled his nose in her hair again. “This is my favorite smell,” he sighed.

She giggled and placed her hands on his over the blanket. They sat there for a while staring at the window watching the snow fall. More though Hermione than Harry, who was busying himself with the smell of her hair.

Hermione heard her parents' footsteps upstairs and tried to bring Harry back to his senses. She had to hit him on the arm to do so.

"What's this?" her father asked enthusiastically. "There are lights on the tree? How'd that happen?"

"Magic," Harry smiled again.

Mr. Granger looked at them on the window sill and laughed. "I should have known."

"And what are theses?" Mrs. Granger asked, spotting the flowers on the table.

"That are for you, Ma'am," Harry smiled.

"What for?" she asked with a smile.

"It's my way of saying thank you for letting me stay here with Hermione over the holidays. Mr. Granger told me you preferred Calla Lilies when I was buying Hermione's so I thought I would get you a few to say thank you. Then I remember you being unhappy about not being able to have lights on the tree and I thought that would have to do so I could say thank you to you also. I personally think Christmas trees look better with lights too, Sir," he smiled warmly at all of them.

Hermione leaned forward so she could look at him and kissed him softly. "You really are sweet," she whispered to him. She got another kiss as a thank you.

"When did you get these?" Mr. Granger laughed, looking at the flowers.

“When you weren’t looking,” he grinned.

“You’re sneaky, Harry,” he chuckled, then gave him a searching look. “Maybe a little too sneaky.”

Harry raised his eyebrows and shrugged, “Maybe I am?”

They all laughed and Hermione glared at her parents. “You two forgot to kiss under the mistletoe,” she laughed. “Harry and I didn’t forget.”

“Oops. Sorry,” her mother laughed.

They walked back over to the bottom of the stairs and kissed. “Better?” her father smiled.

“Much,” she grinned.

Harry and Hermione stood up to start unwrapping their presents with her parents. Harry was glad he had done those things for them when he got a present from them.

They had a small breakfast and only two hours after they finished eating, Hermione was helping Mrs. Granger prepare Christmas dinner. Harry and Mr. Granger were left sitting in the living room with nothing to do.

“Want to pretend to watch the Christmas parade, Harry?” he asked randomly.

Harry tried to stifle a laugh. “I’m not sure I know how to, Sir,” he answered as naturally as he could.

“Oh it’s easy. All you have to do is stare at the screen even though there’s nothing there,” he smiled, him too trying to stay serious and succeeding much better than Harry.

Harry felt very awkward staring at a blank screen with Mr. Granger. He could hear Hermione and Mrs. Granger trying hard not to laugh themselves.

“Oh would you look at that float!” Mr. Granger suddenly said with way too much enthusiasm and pointed at the screen.

Harry bit down on his lips to keep from laughing. He just nodded to show he saw the make-believe float.

“And that one! Now that is just breath taking.”

Harry’s hand shot up to his mouth to force back his laughter. “Yeah it is,” he managed to breath out without laughing.

“See? I told you it was breath taking!” he nodded towards him.

All Harry could do was close his eyes, nod, and shake with laughter.

“Now that kid needs to watch out or he’s going to fall off the curb and get trampled by that big fat guy playing the tuba in the marching band,” he said, still remaining serious.

Harry couldn’t hold it in anymore and neither could the girls. They all started laughing so hard, that even Hermione’s father couldn’t stay serious anymore. They all had tears come to their eyes as they continued to laugh.

“OK. That was completely gay,” Mr. Granger laughed.

Mrs. Granger walked into the living room and clunked him in the back of the head with the spoon in her hand. “Don’t call things gay,” she snapped, still laughing.

“Sorry, Dear,” he murmured, rubbing the back of his head.

“Mr. Granger, I have to ask,” Harry managed to catch his breath, “Why didn’t you become an actor or something like that?”

“Never wanted to be one. Yet I don’t see why I ever wanted to be a dentist now either,” he laughed, shaking his head at himself.

Hermione walked into the living room and hugged him from behind. "Dad, you would have made a great actor."

"Thank you, Sweetheart," he smiled, patting her arm.

She kissed his cheek lightly and walked back into the kitchen after giving Harry a large smile. He grinned on the inside.

Mr. Granger stood up and walked over to the kitchen doorway. He leaned against the door-jam and watched his wife cook.

"How much longer? It's been another three hours," he groaned.

"Not much long. And don't you be groaning at me just because we have no power and you couldn't watch you're little parade. Harry," she called into the living room. "Could you help Hermione set the table for me?"

"Yes, Ma'am," he called back, standing up.

He squeezed passed Mr. Granger and Hermione started laughing.

"What?" they asked together.

"Mistletoe," she smiled, pointing above their heads.

A disgusted look spread across her father's face as he and Harry looked at each other.

"I don't think so. I think I'll skip this one," Harry glared at Hermione.

"You better skip this one," Mr. Granger said, shuttering.

"That's what you get for making that gay comment," his wife laughed as Harry joined Hermione in the dining room.

"Ha, ha," he snapped, kissing her on the cheek.

“You had to say something, didn’t you?” Harry whispered, laughing, to Hermione.

She bit down on her lower lip, smiling and nodded. “Uh huh. No you have to redeem it,” she grinned.

He too grinned and walked over to her. He kissed her softly while putting a plate at her father’s seat. When he pulled back she giggled and they finished setting the table.

It turned out to be the best Christmas dinner Harry had ever had. And the fact that there was constant talking and laughter at the table just made it even better. When they were finished, Mr. Granger helped his wife with the dishes leaving Harry and Hermione to be alone in the living room.

She still had his jacket on and he almost didn’t want her to take it off. He pulled her over to the window they had been sitting at earlier and picked the blanket up. He got her to sit down facing him and he threw the blanket over their laps.

He smiled at her for a few seconds then kissed her deeply and fondly. “I love your family, Hermione!” he smiled. “They are so much better than the Dursleys. And your dad is absolutely crazy,” he whispered the last part.

She blushed and kissed him again. “I know he is,” she laughed. “I’m glad you love my family, because with the way things are going, you’re going to be part of it one day.”

“I hope so!” he smiled.

He slid his hand onto the back of her neck and brought her towards him for the deepest kiss they had ever shared. Her hands rested on his chest as his other one came up to the back of her neck also.

“I love you so much!” he breathed, when he pulled away.

“I love you, too!” she smiled, happy tears coming to her eyes.



He pulled her into a hug and stroked her wonderful hair lightly. "Today has just been perfect and I can't wait till we get out of school so I can marry you," he whispered in her ear.

A/N: ) OK. That part with the TV seemed so silly and stupid to me in my head, I almost didn't put it down. lol I don't know what you thought but I would like to know what you thought of the entire chapter! lol Review please!

Oh. I just thought of something I should probably explain before someone else spots it. Hermione used magic to heat everything up so that her mom could cook dinner. They had no power, so I should have remember to put that in but I didn't. I can't go put it in now because for the next week I don't have any time to do anything but go to band camp, sleep, and check my email. So I won't be able to post anything for a while. Sorry. I'll try to get something up soon.

## Chapter 24:

### Ginny Returns

Harry smiled down at Hermione as she slept soundly in his arms. They were still sitting on the windowsill. Her parents had gone up to bed an hour before, but Harry did not want to wake Hermione to take her up to her room.

He looked over at the fire sleepily and yawned. He wondered what time it was but Hermione was holding onto the arm of which his watch was on.

Maybe I should wake her up, he thought, looking out the window.

The snow had finally calmed down and everything was white. There was still no power though. Meaning the only heat in the house was the fire and many blankets. Just the thought made Harry shiver slightly and he held Hermione closer to him.

He felt his eyes start to fall shut. He sighed, not wanting to fall asleep there, and gently shook Hermione. She stirred slightly but did not wake up.

He lowered his head down and whispered in her ear, "Hermione."

Her eyes cracked open, "Hm?"

"Time to go up to your room," he whispered gently, kissing her cheek.

"Ten more minutes," she moaned, nuzzling up against him.

"We're going to go to bed," he laughed. "You'll get more than ten minutes if we go upstairs."

"But I'm comfortable here," she sighed.

"But it's cold over here."

“That it is. But you keep me very warm.”

Harry pushed them up and threw the blanket away. “How about now?” he asked, still laughing, as she shivered.

“I’ll get over it.”

They sat there for a few seconds and she shivered again. “It’ll be warmer in your bed.”

She pushed herself up and turned to face him. She glared at him, but there was laughter in her eyes. “Fine,” she sighed.

They stood up slowly and placed the blanket back on the couch. Harry wrapped his arm around Hermione’s shoulders as they walked towards the stairs. He started to walk up them when she stopped him.

“What?” he asked confused.

She pointed above their heads and smiled. “You forgot,” she said innocently.

“Whoops,” he smiled.

She slid her hands into his jacket pocket and swayed back and forth, continuing to smile at him. He grinned and cupped her face in his hands. He kissed her gently for several seconds.

They broke apart when they heard someone fall out of the fireplace. “What the hell?” Harry whispered.

They turned to find Ginny pushing herself to her feet. She brushed some of the soot away and looked up. “Harry, Hermione. I’ve got something important to tell you,” she whispered.

“What is it?” Hermione asked as she and Harry moved over to the couch.

Ginny took in a deep breath as they sat down. "OK. Well, to find this out you wouldn't believe what I had to do. Or rather what Fred decided to do," she sighed deeply, "He made a polyjuice potion and plucked one of my hairs. Then he drank it. He went over to Malfoy's house and really laid it on thick with the flirting," she rolled her eyes, "But the weird thing is, it worked."

"What?" Harry asked laughing.

"Yeah. I know. He is so weird. But he did find out what we needed."

"Well?" Hermione urged, tensing up.

"It was Malfoy. He did curse," she glanced at Hermione, "My brother into doing, well, you know. He had hexed him the day he went to your Uncle's house."

"But he seemed to go back to normal after I hit him?" Harry said.

"I guess it knocked him back to his senses. He came home confused with a headache. Wasn't sure what had happened. But when he got sent to Azkaban and found out why, he was furious at himself. He told me he didn't understand why he would do such a thing to you and he wanted to beat himself up every night afterwards. I felt bad for him, but I felt terrible for you," she nodded at Hermione, "I can't imagine how horrible it was for you. I'm so sorry." She stopped talking and stared at her.

Harry turned to look at her and saw her staring straight ahead of her with anger flooding out of her eyes in silent tears. "Hermione?" he whispered, grabbing her hand and rubbing it with the other. "Hermione, are you all right?"

She closed her eyes and took in a shaky breath. "I want to kill him," she hissed.

"Well, this should make you laugh," Ginny smiled. "Fred told me that before he left he, well, he changed his drink into piss and turned all their food into all of his and George's treats."

Harry started laughing and Hermione smiled weakly. "So the Malfoys are either giant birds or have huge tongues right now?" Harry managed to laugh.

She nodded, "And Malfoy drank what he thought was pumpkin juice."

Hermione's smile grew and she tears stopped. "Good."

"Did he find out anything else?" Harry asked still laughing. "Like why he did it?"

"No. He ran out of time and he couldn't take anymore of the potion. He had to leave. I wish he could have found out why," she said before standing up. "Well, I better go. But Ron wanted me to tell you something, Hermione."

"What?" she asked nervously.

"He said that if you're going to kill Malfoy, he wants to help," she smiled briefly.

"That depends on if I can ever handle going near him," she answered with a small smile.

"Yeah," Ginny nodded. "I'll see you guys back at school then."

"Bye Ginny," Harry and Hermione said together.

They watched her disappear back in the flames. Harry went to stand up, but Hermione pulled him back down. When he did, she threw her arms around his neck and started crying on his shoulder.

"Oh, Hermione. I'm sorry," he whispered gently, rubbing her back softly.

"I want to kill the bastard," she gasped between sobs.

“You know I won’t stop you. Come. Lets go up to bed,” he sighed.

He tried to stand up, but she wouldn’t move. He wrapped an arm around her back and the other under her legs. He stood up and pulled her off the couch with him.

He carried her over to the stairs and kissed her on the cheek at the base of them. He took her up to her room and placed her on the far end of the bed before crawling in next to her. He pushed her hair away from her face.

They lay there staring at each other for a few minutes. Tears continued to leak out of her eyes. He would brush them away on occasion and would get a small smile in return.

Finally Harry decided to speak. “Do you want to do something to him when we get back to school?” he whispered.

She nodded with a snuffle.

“What would you like to do?”

“Kill him,” she whispered bluntly.

“Besides that,” he laughed slightly.

“I don’t know,” she sighed as he wiped more tears off her face. “Something that will scar him for life.”

“All right. We have the rest of the vacation to think about what we will do,” he said with a yawn.

She pulled his glasses off for him and leaned over him to place them on the nightstand. She rested her head back down on the pillow and kissed him lightly before she nestled herself into him.

“I love you, Hermione,” he whispered in her ear.

“I love you, too,” she said quietly as she started to fall asleep.

He took in a deep breath before he too fell asleep.

A/N: Yea! I updated! lol I finally had the time and energy to write again. Not sure when I'll get that again. I'm going to be busy for the next two days, but I will try and get something up soon than I did this time. Please review!

## Chapter 25:

### The Holiday Ends

The next few days at the Grangers' house went by smoothly. Harry was starting to feel as though he were part of Hermione's family. He almost was wishing he could stay there with her parents instead of going back to Hogwarts.

The longer he stayed there, the more the idea of staying appealed to him. Most days he got to spend alone with Hermione and that was all he wanted to do. The thoughts of going to class with others did not sound like a good idea.

On the day before they had to leave, Hermione was starting to look a bit sad. Harry wondered if she too wanted to stay and not go back. He didn't feel like talking to her about it. He was pretty sure she did feel the same way. She had to feel safe with her parents and him watching over her.

But when they climbed into bed that night he saw tears swell in her eyes.

"Hermione?" he asked quietly.

She shook her head and buried her face in her pillow. She shuddered with a silent sob. Harry placed his hand on his around her back and pulled her to him.

He kissed her just below her ear before whispering in it, "You don't want to go back do you?"

She shook her head again but didn't say a word. She turned to give him a sad look before hiding in the pillow again. Her eyes were already starting to turn red.

"If it makes you feel any better, I don't want to go back either," he breathed in her ear, sliding his other arm underneath her and hugging her close.



She stopped crying and turned to look at him again. "Why not?" she muttered.

"I'd rather stay here with you and your parents. Plus you feel safer here. Don't you?" he smiled gently at her.

"In a way, yes. But we have to finish school," she sighed.

"No we don't. We can get away with dropping school now," he laughed.

"Harry!" she snapped jokingly.

"Yeah, I know. You have to finish school. Because you're weird like that."

She giggled slightly and kissed him cheek. "Yes, I am." She let out a small sigh and stared him dead in the eyes. "I really don't want to go back though. I just want to stay here with you."

"I know you do," he whispered, staring back. "But we do still have that room to ourselves. We can always skip a class if you need to."

"You mean skip Snape's class?" she giggled, raising an eyebrow at him.

"Duh," he rolled his eyes with a laugh. "We know how to defend ourselves anyway. We don't need that class anymore."

"You never know. It may come in handy."

"Doubt it," he yawned.

She swatted his chest playfully before she yawned herself. He kissed her on her forehead as she started to fall asleep. A few minutes later he felt himself start to join her.

Harry woke up with a jolt around eight in the morning when he heard a loud band come from downstairs. He looked around the blurry room and sighed. My last morning here, he thought sadly.

He looked down at Hermione and saw her rubbing her eyes. When she opened them she smiled up at him. She grabbed the collar of his shirt and pulled him back down to her. She kissed him hard and released him.

“What was that for?” he asked with a laugh.

“I don’t know,” she shrugged, smiling sheepishly. “Would you rather I hadn’t have done it?”

“No,” he grinned, leaning down and kissing her again.

Her arms wrapped around his neck, holding him where he was. He pulled himself over top of her and slid his arms beneath her.

“Wait!” she said, pulling away.

“What? What’s wrong?” he asked confused.

“It’s just, this is where it happened and well...” she began.

“Oh. All right,” he cut her off.

He pushed himself up and off of her. He smiled and reached over for his glasses. Just as he did there was a knock on the door from her father.

“Professor Dumbledore is here. He wants to make sure you get back and leave OK,” he called through the door.

“Already?” Hermione asked.

But he had already walked away from the door. She looked at Harry and he shrugged.

They slowly got out of bed and changed into their Hogwarts robes. Hermione pulled out her wand and waved it around the room. All of their things disappeared.

Hermione looked around sadly and sighed. Harry pulled on her arm and hugged her tightly. "I'll still be looking after you," he reassured her.

"I know," she whispered.

He released her and picked up his wand. "Ready to go?"

"No," she grunted.

"Too bad," he smiled.

She rolled her eyes but also smiled. He shoved his wand in his pocket and grabbed her hand. He had to pull her out of her room and down the stairs with force. She seemed to be back stepping all the way down to the living room.

He stopped her just outside the living room. "Stop resisting. You know you have to go," he whispered quickly.

"I don't want to though," she groaned.

"Well, just remember that we have every evening, night, and morning together," he smiled.

"That made me feel better," she whispered.

"Good," he said, kissing her cheek.

They walked into the living room and found Dumbledore sitting on the couch waiting for them. He smiled up at them and held out his satchel of Floo Powder to Harry. As he did before, he went first and landed in their private common room.

He picked up his stuff and threw it on the couch. He turned around in time to watch Hermione fall onto the hearth. He walked over to her and helped her up.

“Thanks,” she smiled, brushing some of the soot off of him as he did to her.

They sat down on the couch and waited for Dumbledore to come out of the fire next, but there was nothing. Then they heard a noise come from behind them and she jumped a little. They turned around and saw Dumbledore walking down the stairs.

“I just wanted to remind you not to let anyone know you’re down here,” he said, walking over to them. “How are you, Hermione?”

“I’m much better, thanks,” she whispered nervously.

“That’s good. Did anything happen while you were there?”

“No. Nothing,” Harry answered.

“Good. As usual, I expect you in class. And do try not to skip Professor Snape’s class anymore,” he winked.

“Yes, Professor,” they whispered together.

He gave them another smile before heading back up the stairs. They looked at each other and started laughing.

Harry wrapped his arm around her and yawned. “So what do you want to do?”

“I don’t know,” she sighed, leaning into him.

They looked at each other for a second. Slowly he leaned in and kissed her. She grinned at him when he pulled away.

“Have you thought of anything you want to do to Malfoy?” he asked after a few minutes.

“No. Nothing seems bad enough,” she groaned. “I wish I could thank Fred for doing what he did though.”

“You could write him a letter giving your thanks,” he suggested.

“I guess I could,” she shrugged, leaning against him even more. “Just not right now.”

“Thanks fine. I don’t mind in the least.”

Harry rested back into the couch and shut his eyes, wrapping his other arm around Hermione also. He started to fall asleep but just as soon as he thought he had fallen asleep, he woke up to a low rumble from above them. He felt Hermione move against him and he looked down at her.

She looked back through groggy eyes. “I guess everyone’s back now,” she groaned.

“Guess so,” he yawned, looking at his watch. “Wow. It’s almost time for supper.”

“Great,” she murmured.

The rumbling stopped and they both looked towards the ceiling. “Do you think everyone went to dinner?” he asked quietly.

“I guess they must have,” she whispered back.

“Want to go check?”

“Not really.”

“Come on,” he laughed, grabbing her hand and getting up from the couch.

They walked slowly over to the stairs and quietly up them, careful not to make much sound. They peered through the tapestry and didn't see anyone. Harry walked out from behind it and pulled Hermione with him.

"Harry, wait," she grunted.

"What?" he asked patiently.

"I don't want to go down to supper. Let's just stay up here until we hear voices outside the portrait hole."

"Hermione," he sighed. "As much as I would love to stay up here with you all night, alone, I'm starving. We haven't eaten yet today. Aren't you hungry?"

"No," she answered quietly.

"Because you're so nervous to be back here, right?" he whispered, placing a hand on her cheek.

She nodded and fell into him, hugging him tightly. He placed a hand on the back of her head and the other arm wrapped tightly around her.

She looked up at him, tears threatening to fall, and kissed him deeply. He kissed her back and held her as close to him as he possibly could. She broke away and sighed deeply.

"I love you so much, Harry," she whimpered.

He smiled warmly down at her. "I love you, too!"

"What!" someone said from the portrait hole.

They turned to look at who it was and there stood Ron. Hermione squealed and jumped behind Harry.

"Hermione, I'm sorry," he quickly said. "I know I'm not as strong as Harry, but I really wish I had been strong enough to fight the imperius

curse. I'm so sorry that happened. I won't do anything else to hurt you. I promise."

They continued to stare at him. Hermione stood petrified behind Harry, but Harry suddenly felt sorry for Ron. He could hear the honesty in his voice and felt he could forgive him, but only partly. He could never forgive someone who hurt Hermione in that way fully.

"I'd say the three of us need to talk," Harry whispered.

"Yeah," Ron nodded.

They all walked over to the armchairs in front of the fire and sat down. Hermione clung to Harry's arm the entire time and sat as close to him as she could on the sofa.

Ron looked at them nervously for a few minutes before he opened his mouth to speak. But nothing came out.

## Chapter 26:

### Is Forgiveness In Order?

Hermione continued to stare at Ron in fear. She knew it hadn't been him who had done it, but he had been the one to physically do it. She would never be able to face him without fear again.

Harry could sense this and decided to talk first, hoping that she would calm down at the sound of his voice. "Ron," he sighed, not completely sure how to tell him what he needed to. "I need you to know that... she'll never be the same around you again ever."

He saw him hang his head. "I kind of guessed that. I can't say I don't understand, because I do. And I'm extremely sorry. If I had the same mental strength as Harry, I would have been able to fight it off better. I'm so, so sorry, Hermione. I wish it had never happened."

"Me too," she choked out.

"Wishing is not going to make it better, Ron," Harry snapped. "No amount of wishing is going to fix anything."

"I know, but it's all I have. Is there any way I can somewhat make it up to you?" he asked Hermione nervously.

"You could start by never touching me ever again," she whispered, still cowering behind Harry's shoulder.

"I can do that. Anything else? I really want to try and make things right."

Harry hung his head in annoyance and groaned. "Nothing is going to make things right. Nothing could ever make things right. Don't you get that?"

"I know, I know. I'm sorry. It's just... I really miss having you guys as friends," he whispered.



“I don’t know if we’re ever going to be friends again, Ron. She’s still terrified of you and can’t be near you at all. She can’t even stand the sound of your name,” he exploded. “I’m not going to let her live with that fear by becoming friends with you again. I’m not going to have her afraid anymore!”

Ron sat in his chair in shock. He knew he should have seen it coming but he didn’t. He had wanted Harry as a friend again so badly he thought now that everyone knew the truth, there would be no hate towards him. But he was wrong. Harry was still furious with Ron.

“But it wasn’t me,” he spat out awkwardly. “It was Malfoy.”

“Doesn’t matter! It was only Malfoy’s curse! It was you that did that to her! She never said that Malfoy came in her house and raped her! She said Ron came in her house and did that!” he yelled.

Hermione’s grip on Harry’s arm tightened when he said the word. Tears leaked out of her eyes and she buried her face deep behind him, sobbing on occasion.

“Do you see what I mean?” Harry yelled, pointing at her with his other hand.

Ron nodded and swallowed hard. There was no way he could say anything to defend him against that. He ran his hand through his hair and sighed.

“The only thing I can say is I’m sorry then,” he muttered.

His hand fell down on the arm of the chair and he sighed. Harry’s hate was slowly creeping back. How could I have ever felt sorry for him?

He turned towards Hermione and rubbed her arm. She continued to whimper behind him. He forced back tears he wanted to shed for her and wrapped his arm around her best he could.

“Please don’t cry, Hermione,” he whispered gently in her ear.

Suddenly the portrait hole burst open and Malfoy walked in with his goons, Crabbe and Goyle. "So you found out the truth, did you?" he sneered.

They all jumped to their feet. Harry's wand was out in a flash. He looked down and saw that they all had their wands in their hands.

Hermione cowered behind Harry as Ron pulled his own wand out, but it went flying through the air and was caught by Malfoy.

"That won't help you Weasle-by," he smirked.

"What do you want, Malfoy?" Harry yelled.

"Oh, nothing," he jeered, twirling his wand around in his fingers. "Just following orders."

"Orders from who!" Ron shouted.

"No one. Just the Dark Lord."

With that his hand shot to the left sleeve of his robes and he pulled it up. There on his arm was branded the Dark Mark.

"So you've become a Death Eater, have you?" Harry said calmly.

"That's right, Potty. And now that I did as I was told, I'm allowed to do whatever I please."

"So it was his orders that made me do that to Hermione!" Ron asked with anger flooding through his voice.

"Yes, His orders. But it wasn't his idea if that's what you're getting at. It was mine. He just told me to do it." Harry shot a spell at Malfoy but he reflected it. "Now why start a fight you can't win?"

“Because anyone could win against you,” he snarled, shooting another spell at him.

This time it hit him and he fell backwards. Crabbe and Goyle both grabbed him by the arms and threw him back up. Malfoy’s face turned fiery red and he shot a spell at Harry.

He deflected it with a simple flick of his wand. “You’re not the only one that learn how to do spells without speaking them. Hermione, get out of here.”

She started to back away slowly towards the girls’ dormitory. Malfoy pointed his wand at Ron. His eyes glazed over and he sprang at Hermione. She screamed as he pinned her to the ground with a grin on his face.

Harry whipped around and saw Ron trying to get her clothes off. “Get off of her!” he yelled, shooting a purple jet of light at him.

It hit him square in the side and he went flying across the room and into the wall. He fell limp and Hermione started to cry.

“Get out of here, Hermione!” he screamed at her.

She pushed herself up and ran up the girls’ stairway. He didn’t hear a door shut, but knew she would be save up there none-the-less. Boys couldn’t climb that staircase without it turning into a slide.

He shot back around to Malfoy, his eyes and blood flaring up. “How dare you!”

There was a flash of red light and all three of them went flying back out of the portrait hole. Harry ran after them. Just as he stepped out of the hole he was hit in the chest by a spell. He fell down in a heap and groaned. He felt as though his insides were coming out.

“I warned you not to start a fight you couldn’t win,” Malfoy laughed above him.

Harry's hand felt around for his wand. Just as he found it, someone smashed down on his hand, breaking it with a sickening crack. He screamed out in pain and recoiled his arm. His eyes shut tightly, trying to regain mental control of his wand. It will still work at this distance.

He focused on the disarming spell and heard someone crash against the far wall. Gotcha! He pushed himself up with his good hand, but got punched in the face, sending him back onto his back.

"Does Potter want his wand?" he heard Malfoy laugh.

His eyes opened slightly to see his wand being waved in front of his face. He snatched at it, but Malfoy pulled it back before he could reach it.

He heard a sound like a gunshot and felt whoever was left around him being shot away from him. "Stay away from him!" Hermione yelled as two more bodies hit the wall. He could still hear fear in her voice.

Several wands clanked to the floor and he felt Hermione's hand help him up. He swayed where he was and felt her lean him against her. He started to feel used to the pain and opened his eyes.

He looked down at Hermione and forced himself to stand right. "Are you all right?" he asked hurriedly.

"Never mind me. I need to get you to the Hospital Wing," she whispered, gently holding his broken hand. She sounded breathless.

"No. I have to know that you are all right. Did he hurt you at all?" he ordered, pulling his hand out of hers and grabbing hold of her arms. He winced at the pain that coursed through his hand and the wriggling feeling in his stomach.

Her face showed fear he had not seen before. She looked up at him through eyes a three year old would have if they didn't know what was going on. "I need to take you to the Hospital Wing now!"

“Hermione! He didn’t hurt you did he!” he yelled.

She grabbed hold of his injured hand and gave it a small squeeze. “Owe! Fine! We can go.”

“Thank you,” she whispered, kissing him lightly.

She grabbed his other hand and led him down the corridor. She made a point to kick Malfoy’s leg when they passed him. All three of them were rubbing their heads and groaning.

Hermione stopped just before turning down another corridor and looked back at the group of wands on the ground. “Acio wand,” she whispered and caught Harry’s when it was close enough.

“Thanks,” he muttered just before she pulled him down the corridor.

They ran into the infirmary and looked around. “Damn it,” she hissed. She marched Harry over to a bed and forced him to sit down. “I’ll go get Madame Pomfrey. Here’s your wand. Try using it with your left hand if you have to.”

And with that she ran back into the corridors. He waited to see if he could hear any footsteps before relaxing. When there was nothing he placed his wand down and sighed.

He lifted up his shirt and looked down at his stomach. It looked normal but it definitely didn’t feel normal. He ran his hand across it and could feel his insides squirming.

“What the hell did he do?” he whispered.

He looked down at his hand for the first time and saw that several fingers were out of place. Just looking at it made it hurt more. OK. Think about something else. Think about Hermione. No! Don’t think about Hermione. She got hurt. I know she did. I don’t need to dwell on that right now.

He looked around him nervously before lying down. He started to shut his eyes when he heard footsteps coming towards him. He shot up and grabbed his wand.

He watched the door closely and sighed with relief when he saw Hermione come running back in followed by Madame Pomfrey. She pulled her wand out quickly and mended his hand.

“Do you know what spell he used on you before he broke your hand?” she asked.

“No, but it feels like my insides are moving around,” he told her.

“Does it feel like snakes?” she asked nervously.

“Yeah. In a way.”

“Oh dear. We need Professor Dumbledore for this. I do not know the counter curse for that,” she whispered.

Almost as though it were his cue, Dumbledore came striding into the wing. He walked straight up to Harry and pointed his wand at him. In an instant, his insides felt normal.

“Who was it that attacked you?” he asked calmly.

“Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle,” Hermione answered him.

“Malfoy’s now a Death Eater,” Harry added. “He showed us the mark.”

“I see. Harry will you take Hermione back up to the Gryffindor common room. I need to think some things over,” he whispered.

“Yes, Sir.” He hopped off the bed and grabbed Hermione’s hand. “Come on.”

She let him lead her all the way back and then down to their hide out. As soon as they stopped walking, she threw her arms around him and hugged him with all the strength she could muster. He pushed her off and held her arms tightly.

“Did he hurt you?” he asked slowly, staring her dead in the eyes.

Tears swelled in them and she nodded. He allowed her to hug him again, but this time he hugged her back. She sobbed against him and shook with fear. He let a tear fall down his face and rested his cheek on top of her head, causing the tear to fall into her hair.

“What did he do?” he whispered, trying to remain strong in front of her.

She shook her head and looked up at him. “Keep him away from me forever,” she croaked out.

“I will,” he breathed. He kissed her lightly and slid his hands down to hers. “Let’s go lay down.”

“On the couch?” she asked quietly.

“No. In bed,” he answered, just as quiet.

They walked into his bedroom and shut the door. He locked it just in case someone found out there was a room down there.

## Chapter 27:

### The Nightmare

Harry looked around him. He couldn't see Hermione anywhere, but he could hear her screams. "Hermione!" he yelled into the fog.

"Harry!" he heard her high pitch scream call back. "Help!"

"Hermione! Where are you!" he yelled at the top of his lungs.

"Help me!" she screamed again.

"Hermione!"

He whipped around and around where he was standing but couldn't see anything but fog. He could still hear her screaming but didn't know which direction he needed to go in. It sounded as though someone were hurting her.

He spun around again when he heard footsteps. "Hermione?" he called in the direction he thought they had come from.

They stopped. He stared at the spot he thought someone was standing in but didn't see anything. He took a step forward and the fog jumped behind the person who had made the sound of the footsteps.

"Voldemort!" he snarled.

"That's right, Harry," he laughed.

"Where is she?" he shouted. His hand shot to his pocket to get his wand but it wasn't there.

"Lost in the fog. With your friend Ronald. Don't worry. Draco is keeping a very good eye on them. But for you, Harry. The Boy Who Lived is about to be killed. With his own wand at that."



Voldemort pulled his hand out of his pocket along with Harry's wand. He smirked for a second then shot a spell at Harry.

Harry flew backwards and saw blood leaving his chest. He fell to the ground and screamed. His hand tried to stop the blood but it wasn't working. Voldemort walked slowly up to him and continue to smile at him.

"Don't you want to see your girlfriend, Harry?"

He waved the wand at the fog and it disappeared, revealing Hermione with her hands bound and Ron on top of her. Malfoy was pointing his wand at Ron and laughing. Hermione's head turned towards Harry and he saw she was crying.

"Please help me, Harry!" she screamed.

"Hermione!" he yelled, trying to get up but the gash in his chest forced him back down.

"There's no helping her, Harry. But I would say your goodbyes now. Avada kedavra!"

"Harry!" Hermione screamed as green light flooded Harry's vision.

Harry shot up with a gasp.

He looked around him and saw a blurry room. He ripped his shirt over his head and let it dangle around his right wrist. He reached over for his glasses on the nightstand and put them on. He looked down at his chest. Nothing was there, only sweat.

"Thank God," he breathed.

He looked down at Hermione and saw that she wasn't having a good sleep either. She was holding onto Harry's right hand very tightly and her face showed no signs of peace.

He slipped his hand out of hers and threw his shirt across the room. He threw his glasses into his lap and buried his face in his hands. He wiped away as much sweat as he could.

He turned back to Hermione and gently shook her. Her eyes shot open and she stared terrified up at Harry.

“What did he do to you?” he whispered, trying to calm down from his own dream. “Did he manage to do anything to you before I could get him off?”

She nodded and sat up too.

“What did he do?” he breathed, closing his eyes in shame that he didn’t get him off sooner.

“He touched me,” she whispered as quietly as she could.

“Where?”

“Down there,” she sobbed, pointing towards her lap.

Harry sighed and pulled her towards him. He hugged her as tight as he could and tried hard not to cry with her. He noticed that she had been sweating slightly in her sleep too.

“I’m sorry, Hermione,” he moaned in her ear.

“Why?”

“I broke my promise to you. He managed to touch you again and I promised I wouldn’t let him. I’m sorry,” he wept.

“No, Harry. You did the best you could. I don’t want you to be sorry. Just keep me safe right now. Just hold me,” she sobbed.

“I will,” he breathed.

## Chapter 28:

### Things To Think About

The next morning, Harry and Hermione were the first to get to breakfast. They both felt a little shaky from the previous night. They hadn't gotten any sleep after the time they had woken up.

Around four Hermione had decided to tell Harry about her dream. It was worse than the one he had had. He told her his when she was done. They ended up just sitting there, holding each other again until it was time to go down to breakfast.

They ate their food quietly but held tight to one another's hand under the table. Harry was glad they still had a few more days until classes started back up. He knew she felt the same.

Neville was the first to join them. "Morning," he smiled, but stopped at the sight of their faces. "Are you two all right?"

"Yeah," Hermione whispered.

"We're fine," Harry murmured.

"Another thing not to ask about?" he asked.

They both nodded and continued to eat. Neville watched them closely as they all ate, but never said anything about the matter. Instead he asked about their holiday and was able to calm them down a little. But every time someone would say their names, they would jump.

Then Ron walked into the Great Hall and sat down next to Neville, across from them. Harry shot him a glare and both he and Hermione stood up and left. Neville shrugged and went back to his breakfast.

Hermione pulled Harry into a secret passageway and fell into him with silent tears. "I want to go home," she moaned.

“When breakfast is over, let’s talk to Dumbledore,” he whispered gently.

He felt her nod and then let go of him. She kissed him hard before pulling him out of the passageway. He followed her to the entrance to his office and they sat down.

“We’re just going to wait here?” he asked confused.

“Why not? We have nothing else to do,” she whispered, shutting her eyes and resting her head on his shoulder.

He gently kissed the top of her head before resting his where he had kissed. Her arms wrapped tightly around his causing him to smile slightly.

They sat there for what felt like hours, but Harry knew it hadn’t been that long. Just as they were thinking about leaving, Professor McGonagall walked around the corner.

“What are you two doing?” she asked, jumping a little when she saw them sitting there.

They stood up and Hermione spoke. “We’re waiting for Professor Dumbledore.”

“He’s not here. He just left.”

“Just now?” Harry asked.

“Yes. You should be thankful. He left to find a way to help you, Potter,” she snapped. “What is it that you want with Professor Dumbledore?”

Harry turned to Hermione and saw her taking in a deep breath. “I want to go home,” she whispered with her eyes closed.

“How come?”

“Because I’m terrified being here. I want to go be with my parents.”

Harry could tell she was forcing back tears. He wrapped an arm around her shoulders to keep her calm. He looked back at McGonagall and saw her studying Hermione thoroughly.

“Because of what happened yesterday?” she asked quietly.

Hermione nodded as a tear slid down her cheek.

“I’ll discuss it with Professor Dumbledore when he gets back. Why don’t you two go some place quiet and relax,” she said calmly.

Harry nodded with her this time and walked her back to their room. He sat her down on the couch and got her to lay down with her head in his lap.

She turned her head to face the fire and watched the flames dance over the wood. “I’m scared, Harry.”

“I know you are. Hopefully Dumbledore will let you leave,” he said, playing with her hair.

“But I want you to go with me,” she breathed.

“I’ll have to stay here. I really doubt he’ll let me leave. I don’t have a reason to leave.”

“Yes you do! You have to protect me,” she snapped, furrowing her brow.

“I think he’s going to want me to help him figure out some Voldemort things, Hermione. I really want to go with you, but I’m going to have to stay. You know I am,” he sighed.

“I know. I just don’t want it to happen. I don’t want to be away from my protector.”

Harry smiled and pulled lightly on her hair. She giggled and looked up at him.

They stayed there for a while and sat straight up when they heard someone coming down the stairs. They looked behind them and saw Dumbledore coming down them.

“Hermione. I think it may be a good idea for you to go home,” he said calmly. “It will be safer for you there. You can leave in the morning.”

“Can Harry come, too?” she asked quickly as he started to walk away.

“I think it would be safer for him to stay here,” he said quietly.

He walked up the stairs before she could say another word. Her and Harry looked at each other for a second.

“Why would it be safer for you to stay here and for me to go home?” she asked nervously.

“I have no clue. But now I don’t want you to go,” he replied, pulling her close to him and hugging her as tight as he could. “We haven’t spent an hour apart since the summer. I can’t let you go now. I don’t want to be away from you.”

“I don’t either. Come with me. Somehow. Just come with me,” she whimpered in his ear.

“How? Is there anyway I could do that?” he sniffled.

“I don’t know. I just want you to come with me. I really want you with me. I haven’t slept without you since summer and I don’t want to,” she breathed, burying her face into his neck.

He slipped his fingers into her hair and held her as close to him as he could. “I really don’t want you to leave. Well, I do so that you will feel safe, but I don’t want you to leave me. I can’t sleep without you at all.”

They sat there quietly for a while. Harry forced back tears, unable to think about anything but Hermione going away. But Hermione was thinking about all the Dumbledore had said.

“I think Dumbledore has a reason for separating us. I don’t have a clue what it is, but there might be something,” she whispered quietly.

“But he knows you feel safest with me. Why would he do that?” Harry complained.

“I just told you. I don’t know,” she sighed. “Pay attention, Harry.”

“It’s kind of hard to focus on anything when your girlfriend is going away for half a year. Especially when you haven’t been apart for six months as it is,” he groaned.

She opened her mouth to say something, but stopped and just nodded instead. He slid his hand out of her hair and rested it on her shoulder.

“Come on,” he whispered in her ear, sliding his other hand into hers and standing up.

“Where?” she asked calmly.

“Just come with me,” he sighed, looking at her with love and sadness in his eyes.

She looked at him with the same expression and merely nodded. He gave her a small smile and led her into his room. He walked her over to the bed and threw back the covers.

“What are you doing, Harry?” she asked quietly.

“Just lay in bed with me,” he said calmly.

“All right,” she smiled.

He scooted himself to the far end of the bed and watched as Hermione joined him. They laid down slowly with only a few inches between them. Hermione smiled at him but he did not return it. A tear fell down his face and she wiped it away.

“I don’t want you to go,” he breathed.

“I don’t want to go without you,” she whispered back.

Harry felt another tear slide down his face and he saw Hermione look even sadder. He hated doing this to her but he couldn’t help the way he felt.

Suddenly he grabbed her face and crushed her lips with his. She moaned and wrapped her arms tight around his neck. His hands slid down onto her arms then around onto her back. He pulled away just enough to speak.

“I’ll miss you more than you could imagine,” he whispered, allowing his lips to brush hers.

“I’ll miss you more than I’ll be happy to be out of here,” she whimpered.

She pushed their lips back together and he allowed her to pull their bodies together. Her fingers trailed gently under the collar of his shirt, causing him to laugh softly at how lightly she was grazing his skin. She smiled against him and moved her body closer to him.

He pulled back. “Hermione?”

“Yes?” she whispered softly.

“Do you want to...” he started to ask but stopped at the look in her eyes. “Never mind,” he murmured.

“Do I want to what?” she asked, curious as to what it was.



“Never mind. It’s just our last night together until, hopefully, summer and I just thought, maybe, you’d want to, well, you know,” he looked away a little embarrassed at telling her. “But I changed my mind. Just because it’s our last night together and I don’t think that’s how we should spend it.” He looked back at her and saw that she was smiling. “What?”

“You were embarrassed to tell me that, weren’t you?”

“Well, yeah. A little,” he smiled.

“Don’t be,” she said softly. But then her eyes narrowed and she looked passed him, as though thinking about something. “You know what?” she grinned. “I think I do want to. Just remember to be gentle.”

He stared at her in disbelief as she turned her gaze back to him. He let a grin pass over his face, "I'll always be gentle."

She smiled as he started to kiss her again and his hands slowly made their way to her waist.

[illegible]

Harry ran his fingers through her hair as her eyes gleamed with the dying light in the room. Her hands were resting peacefully against his chest while he held her close to him. She smiled dreamily at him and kissed him lightly.

“You make everything seem completely perfect,” she breathed happily.

“Good,” he smiled.

He kissed her cheek and then her nose. Her hand trailed up to his face. She traced the lines on his face from his smile. He smiled bigger and she giggled. His eyes seemed to glaze over as he grinned at her.

“I love that smile,” she whispered.

“What smile?” he asked, his expression not changing.

“The smile that’s meant only for me,” she answered with her own eyes glazing over.

He felt his face heat up and he buried it in the pillow. “Oh. That smile,” he grunted.

She laughed lightly and pushed his face out of the pillow. “Don’t hide it,” she giggled. “I like it.”

He looked at her with his cheeks turning pink, glad that the light was dying. “I don’t really realize I’m smiling like that most the time. All I think about is you and next thing I know I’m smiling,” he admitted.

She grinned and kissed the nape of his neck. “Harry?”

“What is it?” he asked quietly.

“Did you really mean what you said on Christmas?”

“What did I say?” he asked confused.

“That you wanted to marry me,” she breathed.

“Of course I meant it! I love you so much, Hermione! Why wouldn’t I mean it?” he grinned.

“Well, it’s just...” she started blushing lightly, “I was really happy when you said that. I started thinking about what it would be like to spend the rest of my life with you and I started to fall in love with the idea. I wanted to know if you felt the same way,” she smiled heartedly.

“Then this will sound even better to you,” he smiled cheekily. “I feel exactly the same way.” He saw tears come to her eyes as they light up in a way he had only seen a few times before. “Those are the eyes I want to see for the rest of my life.”

“Are they now?” she smiled, letting him wipe her tears away.

“They sure are!”

He gently placed his hand on her neck and gave her a quick, deep kiss. She smiled when he pulled away and grinned at her.

“Do you really think we’ll be able to get married?” she whispered a little too quietly.

“What do you mean?” he said with concern in his voice.

“Well, it’s just that what Malfoy said yesterday about Voldemort being the one that gave him the orders has been making me think. What if one of us, or even both of us, don’t make it out of this fight against him alive?”

“Oh. I promise you that neither of us will die,” he whispered, holding her face gently in both of his hands. “We will both live so that we can get married.”

“You’re going to promise me that?” she asked in disbelief.

“Best I can,” he smiled.

She gave a small laugh and smiled. He ran his fingers through her hair again and kissed her forehead.

“What do you think Dumbledore meant?” she sighed.

“I’m not sure but I intend to find out tomorrow. I don’t like that he’s separating us. I’m determined to find out why he’s doing this.”

“When you do, you’ll write me and tell me. Won’t you?”

“Of course I will. I’ll write to you everyday, No matter if you write back yet or not,” he smiled.

“And I’ll write back to everyone of them,” she smiled.

“You better!” he laughed.

“Oh I will!”

“Good. Oh hey! Have you thought about what you want to do to Malfoy yet? I can do it for you after you leave if you have,” he chuckled softly.

She shook her head and rolled over on him. “Nothing seems bad enough. Especially now.”

She rested her head on his chest and yawned. He stroked her head a few times before he spoke. “Then we won’t do anything. We’ll just let things go the way they should and hopefully he’ll get his in the end. Now what you need is some sleep,” he whispered lightly in her ear.

“Mm,” she moaned, nodding lightly. “But we should get up early so that we can have more time together tomorrow morning before I have to leave.”

“I’ll try to get us up early then,” he whispered as she fell asleep against him.

## Chapter 29:

### The Morning Has Come

Harry woke up with a yawn and grabbed his watch. "Seven-thirty. Thank God," he whispered.

He set it back down on the nightstand and shook Hermione lightly. "What?" she grumbled.

"It's seven-thirty and you're leaving today," he said sleepily.

He sat up and her arm slid off of his chest. He then pushed the covers back and started to get dressed. After he put his glasses on, he turned to look at her.

She remained laying down, watching him all the while. He smiled and leaned down and kissed her cheek. "Come on. Get up," he whispered gently.

Slowly she pushed herself up and got out of bed also. He busied himself with the bed, not sure if she would be comfortable if he watched her like she did him. He straightened himself up just and she was pulling her shirt over her stomach.

She walked around the bed to him and threw her arms around him. "Remember to write me every day," she whispered.

"I seriously doubt that I'll forget," he smiled, lightly hugging her back.

"You have to tell me all that happened each day."

"Same for you. I want us to be sending so many letters back and forth that nobody else could possibly use a school owl. Plus I need to know that you're doing all right. I don't want you feeling upset and depressed and not telling me or not telling me what might have happened to cause it."

“Harry. You realize that my letters will be longer than a book then,” she laughed slightly.

“The more you write, the better I’ll probably feel.” He kissed the top of her head and grinned.

She smiled softly and slid her hands into his. “As long as you’re OK with extremely long letters, I’ll write to you about everything.”

He kissed her cheek gently and she blushed. Then the smile left his face and he looked towards the door. His eyes narrowed and a frown spread across his face. She studied his face for a second then brought a hand up and wiped back a few whispers of hair out from under his glasses.

“What?” she asked calmly.

“I’m not ready for you to leave,” he sighed.

“Well, we don’t know when Dumbledore will come to get me so why don’t we just relax until then,” she whispered with a smile.

“I won’t be able to relax,” he turned back to look at her and she noticed that his brows were furrowed slightly, “Not with knowing you’ll be leaving at any minute.”

Her eyes dropped and she took in a deep breath. “I doubt I will be able to either.”

Harry let out a heavy sigh and looked back towards the door. “Let’s go get your trunk ready in the mean time.”

She shook her head ever so slightly, but he hadn’t noticed. “All right.”

He let go of one of her hands and walked towards the door. She followed slowly and wiped a tear from her face. I do not want to leave anymore.

Harry led her into her room and looked around. "You don't really have much to put in your trunk do you?" he asked, walking off to her desk.

"No. Just a few books," she whispered.

He stopped mid-way through picking up a book and turned to face her. "Are you all right?" he whispered back.

She shook her head and tried to force back the tears that were sliding down her face.

"What is it?" he said gently, walking over to her and setting the book on her bed.

She looked up at him through tears as he placed his hands on her arms. "I want to stay," she whimpered.

"Hermione," he breathed, pulling her to him tightly.

He felt tears come to his eyes when he heard hurried footsteps above them. Then he heard them coming down the stairs to where they were. Just as they started to break apart, Dumbledore was standing in the doorway.

"Come on," he quickly spat out.

Harry walked back over to her desk and grabbed the rest of her books, including the one on the bed. Hermione opened her trunk for him and he placed them in as neatly as he could, not wanting her to scold him for messing up one of her books.

Just as the lid snapped shut, Dumbledore levitated it into the air and sent it whizzing into the common room. They looked at each other, both very confused at why he was rushing them.

"Hurry up now!" he badgered, walking back out the door.

They followed him and saw he already had out his satchel of Floo Powder. He held it out to Hermione but she did not take any.

“Hermione, I have something very important to do, now please get to your parents house while I can make sure you remain safe,” he said calmly, but Harry could hear urgency in his voice.

Hermione turned to Harry with tears in his eyes, but Harry was still watching Dumbledore with a look of great confusion, thought, and annoyance. He slowly turned his head towards her then his gaze.

She leaned up and gave him a soft kiss. “Remember to write me,” she whispered.

“You know I will.”

She gave him a small smile and kissed him again.

“Hermione,” Dumbledore almost snapped.

Harry shot him a glare before giving her another quick kiss. “Bye Hermione.”

“Bye Harry,” she whimpered.

She turned back towards Dumbledore and took a pinch of the powder before walking over to the fireplace. As she walked away, all sound seemed to leave Harry’s ears and fill with the pounding of his heart as he watched her disappear into the bright green flames.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Dumbledore striding away quickly. “Wait,” he thought he said, but still couldn’t hear anything. Then the sound came back to him as he called out again. “Professor!”

“I’ll talk with you as soon as I get back. I promise, Harry,” he heard him call down the stairs.

“But Professor!” he yelled, but there was no answer. He looked around confused. “What am I going to do without Hermione?”



He walked over to the couch and plopped down. He looked around again and noticed a book on the mantle piece. He pushed himself up and walked over to it. He picked it up slowly and sat back down on the couch.

He looked over the cover of the book. It was completely blank with a leather, black cover. There were no words to indicate what was inside the book.

Almost scared, he opened the front cover of the book and there written on the very first page was, Property of Albus P W Brian Dumbledore.

“What the hell?” he whispered, turning the page to reveal another blank page, and then another. “Professor Dumbledore has completely lost it,” he grunted, turning passed more blank pages.

He counted as he turned the pages and on the twenty-third turn there were finally words. The Development Dark Arts. He turned to the next page, half expecting it to be blank, and found a single name on the page. Merlin.

He turned the next page and found much more words on it than the previous page. Wondering what this book was about and why it only said Merlin on the other page, he started to read.

As we all know, magic was started by Merlin. ‘Duh,’ he thought. But what we don’t know is when the dark magic started. Or even with who...

“No way this book will know that,” he rolled his eyes.

He started to close the book, but curiosity consumed him to know if it did in fact know who started dark magic. If it truly did know, he wanted to know also.

A/N: Kind of short, I know. But hey. At least I finally posted. Being back in school has given me serious writers block so I’m hoping to

post more tonight before I fall asleep. So more should come in a little while but in the meantime... Please review: )

## Chapter 30:

### The Confrontation

Harry continued to read, not paying attention to the time, or even to the fact that his heart was still pounding as it did when Hermione had left. The more he read, the more he became confused. Not only at the fact that the book would have several blank pages in a row as several sections, but to what the book was getting at. Only Dumbledore would have a book like this, he thought angrily.

“Who started the Dark Arts!” he practically yelled.

“You haven’t gotten to that part yet?” a voice asked from behind him.

He jumped and spun around on the spot. Standing at the base of the stairs was Dumbledore. He felt his face turn into a scowl. “No I haven’t. Why’d you make Hermione leave so quickly?”

Dumbledore closed his eyes and took in a small breath. “I had more important matters to attend to.”

“Like what?” he snapped.

“Harry. Come with me to my office,” he said calmly. He continued to glare at Dumbledore as the old man walked up the stairs. “Come Harry!” he said forcefully.

Harry jumped to his feet and followed him up the stairs. They walked straight into the main common room without even checking to make sure the coast was clear. When Harry looked around, he understood why.

Outside the windows was a pitch-black sky with an occasional flash of distant lightening. The fire was almost completely burned out, and not a soul was to be seen out of their beds. He looked down at his watch, but could not see either of the hands in the darkness of the room.

“Come along, Harry,” Dumbledore whispered from the portrait hole. He ran to catch up with him and heard the soft pound of the Fat Lady’s portrait shutting.

They walked quickly, but quietly, to Dumbledore’s office. Once inside with the door shut, Dumbledore marched straight over to his desk and pulled out a slip of paper from one of the drawers.

Harry walked slowly over to him and asked quietly, “What’s that?”

“Something Professor Snape found out for us,” he said calmly.

“What did he find out?” he asked, sitting down in one of the chairs across from Dumbledore.

“Harry. Why do you think I left that book down there?” he asked after a few minutes of silence.

“So that I would read it I guess.”

“But why do you think I wanted you to read it?”

“I don’t know. To know who started the Dark Arts?”

“That is part of it. The other part is to understand a dark wizard’s mind more. If you have noticed, that book is very detailed, right down to the exact stroke you make with you’re wand. Can you guess when it was written?”

“No. But it looks fairly new.”

“That’s only because all those that have owned it have taken good care of it over the years. It was actually written over one thousand years ago. Can you guess who wrote it?”

“A dark wizard. I could tell that much by how it was written. But I couldn’t tell you who.”

“By the great, great, great grandson of the one who developed dark magic.”

“But who did develop it?”

“I’ll get to that in a second. But right now I am still explaining why I’m having you read that book.”

Harry nodded and shut his mouth tight, not wanting to argue until it was absolutely necessary.

“The reason I want you to understand a dark wizard’s mind is so you will grasp the reasons they do the things they do. So you will understand how they come up with the things they do. I am hoping that by you knowing what dark wizards know and how they think, you will be able to defeat Voldemort with more ease.”

“All right. So I learn to think like a dark wizard and maybe I can outsmart Voldemort. Is that what you’re thinking?”

“In a way. Yes. But more importantly, you will be able to defend yourself against him easier. Now. Do remember who he is the heir of?”

“Salazar Slytherin.”

“Precisely. But he is also the great, great, great, great, great grandson of Mortamis C. Slytherin,” he said with a slight smile, glad that Harry remembered.

“Who’s that?”

“The writer of this book.”

“So, Salazar Slytherin created the Dark Arts?” he leaned forward in the chair.

“Yes. And all of his powers and abilities were passed down to Voldemort.”

“But what does that have to do with anything?” he asked confused, falling back against the chair.

“Mortamis Slytherin wrote down everything his great, great, great grandfather created. Not one thing was left out. Except one,” he whispered, holding a crooked finger.

“Which was what?” he asked, still confused.

“Parseltongue. The only thing that wasn’t passed down to Mortamis. Besides that, everything that Salazar Slytherin knew is in that book. That means that everything Voldemort knows is in that book except for parseltongue. You were given that trait the night your parents were killed, so that hardly counts as a lose. But if you read the entire book, you will know as much as Voldemort does. But there have been things that Voldemort created that won’t be in there. So you’ll just have to make due with what we have.”

“But Sir. Why was the book written?”

“As a study guide for all those in the Slytherin house. Mortamis was Potions teacher and head of Slytherin house all those years ago. He passed them out on his first day. Or so I’m told by elder headmasters. He made enough for all that were in school that year and had all those that graduated pass their book down to the next group of first years. The book you are reading belonged to Mortamis himself.”

“But what is with all the blank pages?” he said, sitting back up.

“He bewitched every book to be opened to anyone of those blank pages if someone who did not flip through each and every page tried to open it just to find out what it was about. Those that have started reading will find they can turn straight to the page the last left off on when they return to the book.”

“What if you finished the book? Would you have to start back over or could you just turn straight to the page it starts on?”

“You can just open the book and read what you want. But only after you read the whole thing. I can not explain why for that,” he added as Harry started to open his mouth again.

“All right. But you still haven’t answered my most important question,” he snapped with a glare.

“And which question is that?” he asked calmly.

“Why’d you make Hermione leave so quickly?” he whispered, his voice filling with sadness. “You could have waited until you got back and let us spend the day together. Why didn’t you?”

“This is an area where reading the entire book would come in handy,” he sighed.

“No. All you have to do is tell me why you didn’t give us the day together,” he snapped.

“The less time you spend together between now and the time you face off Voldemort for the final time, the better.”

“What! Why!” he yelled.

“What is written on this piece of paper has the reason why,” he whispered, holding out the crumpled bit of parchment out to him.

“No. I want you to tell me,” he said, shaking his head and staring at the paper as though it would catch fire if he touched it.

“Voldemort is trying to use Hermione to get to you. To weaken you. The less time you spend with her the better. If he figures out that you care about her more than anyone thinks, he could permanently end things in a heart beat.”

“And if he found out I was in love with her it would all come crumbling down now, wouldn’t it?” he breathed.

Dumbledore did a double blink of surprise before he answered. “Unfortunately. And it would be best if you didn’t write to Hermione. Any one of the owls you send out could get intercepted and he could find out just by what you write. I would rather not see you or Hermione get hurt. Please do as I advise.”

Harry stared at the floor with tears in his eyes. “When will I get to see her or talk to her again?”

“During the summer I will not stop you. But for now. You won’t.”

He nodded and bit down on his bottom lip, trying as hard as he could to keep the tears down.

“I want you to go back to your common room and read more of that book. But make sure you get plenty of sleep before your first class tomorrow.”

He nodded again and stood up slowly. He walked towards the door without looking at Dumbledore.

“Oh and Harry?”

“Yeah,” he choked out.

“I’m sorry about this. I truly am. I know how hard it must be to be away from her when you haven’t since summer.”

“You could never know how hard it is,” he whispered before heading out the door.

He walked quietly back up to his common room, running into no one. Not even Filch.



He sat on the couch next to the book and stared into the fire, letting the tears finally fall. After what felt like an hour, he picked the book back up and started right where he left off.

A/N: Yes! I was able to post another chapter! Not sure if I'll be able to post another one tonight or not. Hopefully I will. Please review: )

## Chapter 31:

### The Year Ends Slowly

Harry found him reading the book every chance he got. Between classes, meals, homework, and sleeping. He never gave himself a break. It took him just over two weeks to finish it and to his great surprise, he was still passing every class. Even Defence Against The Dark Arts with Snape. That one he seemed to be doing exceptionally well in.

When he finished it, he realized there were things he hadn't fully understood, but there were no page numbers so he would never be able to find them by just flipping through it. So he read it a second time. And then a third time until he finally understood everything.

He now saw and understood the reasoning for trying to use Hermione against him. He would be far too focused on keeping her safe to be able to protect himself. He still did not like the fact that Dumbledore sent her away, but he thanked him for it. All he wanted was for Hermione to be safe and happy and Dumbledore was insuring that.

But one thing still bugged him. So on a day he had the afternoon off, he went up to his office.

"Ah. Harry. Have you finished the book?" he asked calmly.

"Yes. Three times in fact. There were some things I needed to clear up. But that's not what I need to discuss with you."

"Oh?"

"No. What I want to know is, what was so important that you had to have Hermione leave quickly so you could get to it?" he whispered, not wanting anyone to overhear, sitting down across from him as he always did.

"I was wonder when you would ask me that. I was out looking for Mr. Malfoy. Not Lucius mind you. Draco. He disappeared after the night

he attacked you. And I can't have a student do that and then openly admit he was a death eater and bewitched one student to physically harm another. He is now in Azkaban and I am hoping he stays in there long enough for you to face Voldemort alone."

"Hoping? Shouldn't he?" he asked, his brow furrowing.

"Only if the dementors haven't joined sides with Voldemort will he remain in there."

"Oh. Did you find anything out from him?"

"Only that this has been well planned out and we won't stand a chance," he said with a small smile.

"That's what he thinks. But how did he get the upper hand over me that night he attacked us?"

"Ah yes. That I did find out. A luck serum was given to him, Mr. Crabbe, and Mr. Goyle. A sure way to make sure they succeed with what they've been ordered to do."

"That's all I needed to know. Thank you, Professor," he nodded.

"You're welcome, Harry. Is there anything you need to know concerning the book?" he smiled

"No. I understand everything perfectly now. Oh. One question."

"Yes?"

"I won't turn into a dark wizard after reading it, will I?"

"No, you won't," Dumbledore chuckled. "I, myself, have read the book over a hundred times in my day and I haven't turned into a dark wizard."

Harry laughed slightly too. "All right. Thank you."

“Of course.”

“I have homework to go do,” he sighed, pushing himself out of the chair.

“By all means. Go do it,” he continued to smile.

He laughed again as he walked out the door. As it shut behind him, he brought his hand up to his mouth and massaged his cheeks. It was the first time he had smiled since Hermione had left.

The rest of the year dragged by creepily slow. Without Hermione there, time seemed to snail by. His only company at times was either Neville or an equally bored Hedwig.

He longed to write her a letter. In fact he had written her a letter everyday, but he never sent them out. He didn't want anything to happen to Hermione and he feared something would if he sent her a letter.

He hadn't gotten one from her either. He figured Dumbledore had told her parents not to let her send any letters. At least that's what he would have done.

Finally the train ride home came. Neville was his only companion in his compartment. He figured it was time to fill him in on some of the stuff that had happened. His reaction to everything was silent, opened-mouth shock.

“So how's Hermione doing now?” he finally managed to speak after an hour of silence from both of them.

“I don't know. I haven't been allowed to talk to her since she left. Dumbledore said it would keep her safe. And that's all I want,” he answered sadly.

“You still haven’t told me. Are you together in a romantic sort of way. Everyone has been thinking that since about late October, early November.”

“Yeah we are. But please don’t tell anyone. I don’t think others deserve to know. They’d only try to find a way to bring us down.”

“I won’t tell anyone anything you’ve told me today. I swear.”

“Thanks Neville.”

The rest of the train ride went by entirely too slowly and neither knew what to talk about. Harry knew there was more he could tell him but he wanted to tell Hermione first.

Then they slowly started to slow down and eventually stop. Harry pushed himself up lazily and rolled his trunk through the barrier by himself for the first time. He looked around and groaned. He couldn’t see the Dursleys anywhere.

“Harry!” he heard a girl yell.

He turned around and there was Hermione with her friend Kira and a boy he didn’t know. He stared in disbelief before he ran up to her and wrapped his arms tightly around hers.

“Oh my God! Hermione! I missed you so much!” his muffled voice sounded from her neck.

“I missed you, too! I was starting to think I wouldn’t see you again. That made me cry on several occasions,” she whimpered in his ear.

“No. I don’t want you crying. I want you to be happy.”

“I am now that you are here” she grinned as he kissed her neck softly.

“So what are you doing here? Please say I’m going to your house for the summer.”

“I really wish I could. But I am just here to give you a ride to your aunt and uncle’s house. This is Michael. Kira’s boyfriend,” she said as they let go of each other. “He’s the one that gave me the ride.”

“Hi,” Harry smiled briefly before turning Hermione’s attention straight back to him. “Would it be all right if you guys didn’t take me home right away?”

“Why?” she smiled.

“I think you know why,” he grinned back. He leaned down and kissed her deeply.

Off in the distance, in the smoke billowing out of one of the trains, was a face with red eyes, two slits for the nose, and smile that showed no good would come to this face.

“So he does love her,” the face hissed as the train rolled away.

The End

A/N: THE SEQUEL WILL BE UP SHORTLY I PROMISE! But right now I really should be going to sleep cuz I have to get up in 6 hours and I doubt that will work. But... Please review! Please review! Please review: D